

Expert Scholarly Comments

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JEWISH PRAYER

Hear my cry, O God;

listen to my prayer.

From the ends of the earth I call to You,

I call as my heart grows faint;

lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For You have been my refuge,

a strong tower against the foe

I long to dwell in Your tent forever

and take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.

Psalms 61. 1-4

SYMBOL OF JUDAISM



The Star of David

Also known as ‘The Magen David’, the six-pointed star is the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today. The star is supposed to represent the shape of King David’s shield.

Basic Jewish Belief

The Messiah or the Savior is “yet to take birth” and he shall be the one who would be charged with:

- 1) Rebuilding the Temple that was defiled, desecrated, and destroyed by the invading Greeks,
- 2) Bringing back home, all Jews living in different corners of the world, with a view to consolidating the Jewish Nation.

JUDAISM

at a glance

Judaism is the oldest of the Middle-eastern religions. It is the parent-religion of the two widespread world-faiths: Christianity and Islam. It is the religion of God's chosen people of Israel. Their belief is that there is Only One God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, just and gracious. He has created humans, in His own image, who are capable of attaining perfection and reaching the pinnacle, through God's grace and love.

Judaism is a monotheistic faith, as are Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism. The soul, according to Judaism, is the breath of God, and it is immortal, just as God is. The universe was created out of nothingness (void/vacuum) by the single utterance of one word of God. Since God is good, His creation is good, too.

Jews believe that there is no devil and no hell. Whosoever transgresses the will of the Lord, commits a sin. Evil springs up when one forsakes the heavenly-path, and blindly follows senses, superstitions and rituals. The existence of evil tendencies is a test for human beings, who have been blessed with the intellect to make their choice of the ideal path they wish to follow. Sincerity, selflessness, prayer, repentance and service-to-humanity, are the essentials for attaining true peace and happiness.

The Prophets of ancient Israel perceived the activity of Yahweh in the history of their people. They saw that Yahweh, the 'God of the Exodus', always brought oppressed people, living in bondage, to freedom and a new way of life. At different times in Israel's history, there was someone leading the Exodus.

From about 1000 B.C., Moses was succeeded by a line of kings, beginning with David. The Prophets recognized the continuance of Yahweh's guidance and protection in each king, as he ascended the throne. But, not all kings were faithful, and the Prophets looked more and more towards the future, when they expected a king like David,

who would be strong enough to lead the people to freedom, and to restore Israel to its former pre-eminent position. Abraham founded Judaism around 2,000 B.C, in the Middle-Eastern lands.

The Tanakh, especially the Torah (first five books of the Tanakh), are considered very sacred. The Talmud (explanation of the Tanakh), teachings of each branch (the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reformists) and the writings of sages, such as the Maimonides, are other significantly revered Scriptures.

For Orthodox Jews, God is the Spirit, personal, all-powerful, eternal and compassionate. They do not have faith in the Holy Trinity. Jesus is not considered to be the Savior, by a majority of the Jews. The few that see him as the Messiah, know him as a martyred Jewish Rabbi. Only Messianic Jews and Hebrew Christians accept Jesus as the Savior.

Some Jews believe that prayer, repentance, and obeying the Godly-laws are essential for attaining Salvation. The obedient shall be honored, and they shall live, forever, with God, while the unrighteous shall be condemned.

Prophet Ezekiel had a vision that may have allowed him to peer into the twentieth century. It's possible, say some modern commentators, that he saw both, the holocaust and the birth of the State of Israel. To him was given a vision of "a valley with lifeless, dry and dead bones".

As per his own limited human thinking, it was clear to him that these bones could never again come back to life. But God told Ezekiel: "Say to the breath, thus says the Lord God, come oh breath from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again".

And, amazingly enough, the corpses then stood on their feet. The dead lived, once again.

Then God explained to him what the vision meant, in detail. "Oh mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say our bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed. Thus says

the Lord God, I am going to open your graves, and lift you out of the graves, oh my people, and bring you to the land of Israel.... I will put my breath into you and you shall live again... I will set you upon your own soil”.

Ezekiel was addressing the Jewry of Babylonia. They felt they had no hope: they were mere bones who would no longer live.

They believed Jewish history was at its end. For them, Ezekiel expressed the Prophecy of Hatikvah - the Hope. Ezekiel's vision proved to be correct for the Jews of his day. Babylonian Jewry returned to their land, and reclaimed their heritage.

European Jewry, in the mid-1940s, believed that with six million slaughtered they, too, were faced with a valley of dry and dead bones that could no longer live.

Yet, the words of Ezekiel proved to be a beacon-light for them, encouraging them to march on. The State of Israel was born, three years after the end of the Holocaust. Jews returned to the Promised Land, where they adopted, as their National Anthem, the song known as Hatikvah, based on a poem by Naftali Herz Inber.

The Torah

When Jews use the word Torah, or Bible, it can have three meanings. In its most restricted, and widely used meaning, it is a synonym for the five books of Moses, encompassing the text that orthodox Jewry believes to be the direct communication between God and human divines.

The Torah found in the arch of every synagogue is a copy of these five holy books, painstakingly handwritten on parchment, which together are called the Pentateuch, coming from the root word 'penta' meaning five. In computer-jargon, the Pentium chip is considered to be a master at retrieving information. However, Jews would rather have the Pentateuch as their source of wisdom, no matter how powerful a Pentium is.

The Jewish disfavor the Jewish Bible being designated as the Old Testament, by the Christians. They assert that it bears an uncomplimentary connotation.

Many Christians believe that the special covenant between God and the Jewish people was taken away and given to the new Israel of the Church.

The Bible of the Jews, as per Christian claims, was also superseded by a new and improved version, that they call the New Testament, thereby rendering much of the former Testament old and outdated. To Jews, however, the Bible remains extremely precious, always new, fresh and relevant, for all generations. It's the Only Testament, for them.

The Torah can also refer to the later books of the Prophets appended to the five books of Moses. Together, these form what is referred to by the Jews as the Bible. In this larger version of the Bible there are 24 books in all.

And now, the third meaning of Torah. This is based on its literal definition. Torah is a teaching, a doctrine, a law. Any discussion of the Bible, any analysis that helps us to understand the Bible better is a teaching, and therefore qualifies to be called Torah.

The deeper root meaning of Torah is that it springs from the word 'yarah' which means "to shoot" (at a target). Obviously, to shoot at something, an arrow must be directed in that direction. So, by inference we can safely say that Torah means "correct direction". Torah advises and recommends the right path to tread.

We may say that the five books represent five fingers of God's one hand, enabling us to hold on to some of his essence:

- 'Genesis' comes from the word for 'beginning'. The book takes us from Creation and the beginning of history, through the founding fathers of the Jewish people, and the beginning of the story of the children of Israel.

- ‘Exodus’ means “going out”. This book deals primarily with the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, where they had been enslaved.
- ‘Leviticus’ is named after the tribe Levi, those appointed to serve in the Temple. This book gives the detailed instructions of Temple service and sacrifices.
- ‘Numbers’, the fourth book gives us the census of the Jews in the desert and follows their wanderings, as they approached the Promised Land.
- ‘Deuteronomy’ literally means “the second law”. This is the lengthy last speech of Moses to his people, his farewell address, recapitulating what had happened to the Jews until then, as well as the covenant they made with God, that would ensure their survival.

The Biblical Heroes

Abraham

Abraham was the founder of the Jewish people and was originally called Abram. After he became a believer, his name was changed to make it encompass a wider meaning “father of many nations” (av hamon goy'im). Earlier Abram (Avrom) or “father of Arom” restricted his leadership to a small group. Accepting monotheism, Abraham was now given charge of spreading the word of God. His new name was given to teach him not to simply “keep the faith” but to spread it, far and wide. He was on a mission to share the spiritual truths with the entire world, not a small limited area.

Sarah

Abraham's wife Sarah also had another name before her conversion to Judaism. She was Sarai, “my princess”, in accordance with a title worthy of a Jewish wife. She now became a copartner with Abraham in spreading his missionary gospel. Ann so now she became Sarah (Princess) for the entire mankind.

Isaac and Rebecca

Isaac, the son of Sarah and Abraham, carried forward the spiritual teachings of his parents. His name is derived from the Hebrew root for laughter, because it seemed a big joke, when an Angel told Abraham aged 100 and Sarah aged 90 that they would be blessed with a child. The birth of Isaac (Yitshak) proved that when God promises, nothing is impossible. He would be proof of the religious truth that he who laughs, lasts.

Rebecca (Rivkah) in Hebrew means “to bind together”. She tied her future to Isaac, the man who loved God so much that he was willing to be bound on the altar, ready for being sacrificed.

Jacob

Jacob (Yakov) in Hebrew means: “heel”. A child of Isaac and Rebecca, he was passive, introverted, and non confrontational in his early years. He was somebody on whom people could easily “step upon” and dominate. Only later in life he realized that he had to change to win, for God doesn’t fight all the battles for us, if we are not ready and willing to work a little. In a traumatic moment when he fought an attacker, his name was changed to Israel (Yisrael), meaning “a fighter for God”. Failing to fight evil permits evil to triumph. It is not what God wants. So using force to retaliate is justified.

Rachel

She was the love of Jacob’s life. Her name comes from “the beloved”. When his prospective father-in-law Laban made him work seven years, for Rachel’s hand, Jacob worked happily. But, Laban was deceitful. He gave Leah, the other daughter, in marriage. That was when Jacob used to be trampled upon by all and sundry. And so he worked another seven years for his true love. Since bigamy wasn’t banned until then, he was doubly blessed, living with Rachel and Leah happily.

The Twelve Tribes

The next twelve heroes came in rapid succession: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulan, Dan, Naftali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin. These are the children of Israel, each of whom had such large families that each had a tribe of his own to lead. Every one was as different as twelve months of an year. According to mystical teachings of the Kaballah, each of them is, in fact, linked to the twelve months.

When the Jewish people later settled in Cannan, the Promised Land of Israel, the country was divided into twelve sections so that every tribe could have its own domain. The result was something of a confederation of autonomous states, enjoined by a treaty of sorts, maintaining a distinctive quality, while sharing common ideals and objectives, remaining unified as one nation.

Moses

Three generations after the children of Israel were born, Amrom, the grandson of Levi, married Yocheved, and they had a child named Moses. Unfortunately, they did not even have the opportunity to name their child at that time, faced with persecution with echoes of the modern-day holocaust, they had to hide the child, in a little ark or boat, to prevent him from being killed.

The Pharaoh had decreed that the killings. The parents were hoping for Godly intervention, because nothing is impossible when God wills it. Pharaoh's daughter, ironically enough, found the ark floating in the water, and rescued the child. She, like the modern-day saint Raoul Wallenburg, became the savior for the child, and named him Moses, because "from the water she drew him". She raised him in the very place where he would later play a prominent role for his people. Who would have known that this would be the man who would become the greatest leader in all of Jewish history?

Aaron

Aaron was the brother of Moses. It must have tough for Aaron to accept that his kid brother Moses had overshadowed him. Moses outshined Aaron. But Aaron was a great man in his own right, and was also given a position of prominence by God. He became the High Priest in the Temple, charged with overseeing all the religious duties, functions and responsibilities that go with such a charge.

Role of Women and Family

The Bible describes God as taking the rib from man and “building” it into a woman. It uses the Hebrew word ‘*va'yiven*’ which is related to the word for profound understanding. Based on that, the Talmud concludes that God endowed women with more insight and intuitive intelligence than men.

And when the Talmud wonders why, at the time of Revelation, God told Moses to first “speak to the daughters of Israel” before addressing the men, and to ask them whether they wished to receive the Torah, the response is: “Because the way of men is to follow the opinion of women.”

Woman is seen to have one more attribute in much greater measure than man. The Hebrew word for kindness, *rachamim*, has as its root *rechem*, which means womb.

The very name of God that expresses this characteristic of mercifulness and compassion appears in Hebrew with a feminine ending. God Herself sometimes chooses to be more like a woman.

One of the very first directives God gave to Adam and Eve was, “Be fruitful and multiply.” Jewish theologians explain that principle, *imitatio Dei*, (imitating God) tells Jews that in order to be like God, they must create in order to continue the world God brought into being. According to Hebraic law, Jews may not remain childless. The minimum number of children necessary to fulfill this ‘requirement’ is two: one boy and one girl. Of course, if

a married couple tries and fails to conceive, they cannot be blamed. But to avoid parenthood is considered a sin.

Traditions

Jewish law provides guidance to its followers from the cradle to the grave. The Jewish people have been persecuted for many ages. As such, children are their secret to survival and a viable future.

Jews often congratulate each other with the words ‘*mazel tov*’. The phrase is generally translated to mean ‘good luck’, however *mazel* refers to a constellation, one of the signs of the Zodiac. While Jews may not believe that the stars determine fate, some may believe that the stars have an influence. Mosaic floors in some of the ancient synagogues depict the signs of the Zodiac.

Jewish tradition says that when parents choose a name for a new baby, they will be blessed with Divine Inspiration. Jewish children are given a Jewish name in addition to their secular one. Ashkenazim Jews of Western Europe are forbidden to name a child after a living person. They believe that it is too soon to see if the living person will turn out wicked in the end and that it would therefore be unfair to link a child to someone whose end is unsure. The Sephardic Jews, from Eastern European and Oriental heritage, believe in honoring a person they most respect and admire during their lifetime by naming children after them.

A girl is given her Jewish name at the synagogue on the Sabbath closest to her birth. A boy receives his name on the eighth day after his birth as part of the *brit millah*, or circumcision ceremony.

Circumcision in the Bible is called a “sign of the flesh”. By removing the foreskin, a Jew becomes visibly different in his very body. It is a spiritual link with God that can never be removed. The person who performs the circumcision is known as a *mohel* and the person who holds the baby, a great honor indeed, is called the *sandek*. In mystic tradition, the sandek is showered with blessings from God for his role. When the circumcision is complete, all present join in a prayer of three wishes to the child: “May he grow to Torah, to *chuppah* (the wedding canopy), and to good deeds.”

When a male child reaches the age of 13, he becomes *Bar Mitzvah*, or a “son of the commandments”. He is called to the Torah to recite blessings or lead the congregation in prayer. On this day, a boy becomes a man because he is considered mature enough to be responsible for his actions.

Judaism recognizes that girls mature faster than boys and for this reason, girls receive *Bat Mitzvah* when they are 12.

In Judaism, marriage is clearly commanded in the Bible: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24). When a wedding date is set, there is only one restriction: a wedding cannot be held on the same day as another Jewish festival. This is because Jews are told, “We must not mix one joy with another” (Talmud, Moed Katan, 8b). The ceremony itself takes place under a canopy called a *chuppah*. In the first part of the ceremony, the bride circles the husband seven times, mystically demonstrating that she is entering the seven spheres of her beloved’s soul.

Probably the most commonly recognized feature of a Jewish wedding ceremony is the breaking of a glass by the groom at the conclusion. Though marriage is considered a time of supreme happiness, the breaking of the glass is to remind Jewish people that their joy cannot be complete as long as the Temple in Jerusalem remains destroyed. It reminds them that rejoicing must be tempered with remembrance of their people’s catastrophes. In modern terms, it would be the equivalent of saying they must never forget the Holocaust, no matter how happy they are.

Death, in the Jewish view, is a matter of going from one room to another, ultimately, a far more beautiful location. Judaism teaches that God endowed humans with His essence and therefore, “the spirit returns unto God who gave it.” Death is the moment of separation of the soul from the body.

Orthodox Jews are profoundly opposed to cremation. Jewish tradition demands a simple pine coffin. Burial follows so that the Biblical decree, “to dust you shall return” can be fulfilled with the body’s decay in the ground. The deceased must also be buried as quickly as possible, ideally no later than 24 hours, to avoid shaming the body by neglecting its required religious procedure. The deceased is buried in a clean, white handmade shroud without pockets, the final symbol of life signifying that “you can’t take it with you.”

The seven days following a person’s death is a time of mourning known as “sitting *shiva*”. This is a time when friends share meaningful stories with the relatives of the deceased and help them to cope by helping them to remember all of the positive memories that remain that death cannot erase.

The Festivals

The Jewish Sabbath, or *Shabbat*, is the seventh day of every week which is set aside for one to become recharged spiritually. Judaism does not have names for the days of the week, and therefore, Sunday is considered the first day to *Shabbat*, which causes the Sabbath to fall on Friday evening.

Judaism recognizes a number of religious festivals throughout the year. Two holidays, which are considered High Holy Days are: Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Rosh Hashana has also been called the Jewish New Year. The name literally means “head of the year” and is instituted in Leviticus 23:24-25, with the sounding of the ram’s horn (or *shofar*) as a day of remembrance. It is a time of introspection, to look back on the mistakes of the past year and to plan changes for the upcoming year. No work is permitted on this holiday and much of the day is spent in synagogue. On this day, Jews believe that God brings out his scales, in order to weigh the deeds of every person. The way the scales tilt will determine a person’s fate for the coming year.

Yom Kippur is celebrated ten days after Rosh Hashana. The days in between are known as ‘the ten days of repentance’. Yom Kippur was selected as the Day of Atonement because it remembers when God forgave the Jews for worshipping a golden calf. Moses had pleaded with God for forty days and forty nights to gain His forgiveness for his people for their idolatrous sin.

Passover is a widely celebrated holiday, which commemorates the liberation of the Jews from Pharaoh’s bondage in the days of ancient Egypt. According to the Bible, Moses pleaded with Pharaoh to “let my people go.” When Pharaoh refused, God sent a series of ten plagues upon the Egyptians. The last was the most terrible, every firstborn Egyptian was to die at the stroke of midnight on the 15th of the Jewish month of Nissan. Jews, on the other hand, were to mark their doors with the blood of a sacrificed lamb so that God could “pass over” the houses in which His people lived.

Since this holiday is considered to carry such import, rather than hosting the service in the synagogue, it is held at home, involving the people most involved in carrying on the tradition; the children. The special meal has a fixed order and is called a *seder*. A special prayer- book called a *haggadah* is used for the occasion. The Egyptians were so anxious to be rid of the Jews after being inundated by the 10 plagues they forced them to flee before their bread could rise. The flat, unleavened bread called *matzoh*, happily recreates the Jews’ quick departure from slavery. Christians know this meal as The Last Supper. This is the meal that Jesus partook of before his execution by the Romans.

Shavuot commemorates the day the Jews received the Law of God and were taught that true freedom means being free to be themselves, to be happy and to be holy. After leaving Egypt, God told the Jews that it would take them 49 days to reach Mt. Sinai. On the 50th day, they were to be given the Torah.

Sukkot is the holiday that celebrates Jewish survival in the face of impossible odds. Under God’s special care, the Jews spent 40 years wandering the desert before they could arrive at the Promised Land with the Torah after leaving Mt. Sinai. During this time, God fed

the Jews with *manna* (bread from the sky) and for protection from the harsh sun, clouds followed the Jews on their journey. During the eight days of this holiday, Jews build small huts called *sukkahs*. The point is to exchange the security of a house for a frail structure, making one realize that one's ultimate protection comes from God.

Purim is a holiday that teaches Jews never to be silent in the face of those who want to destroy them. The story began when Esther became the wife of King Xerxes after he got rid of his wife because she did not obey him. Esther hid her Jewish heritage from the king, until she learned that one of his top advisors, Hamman, was planning a mass execution of Jews on a day of his choosing because Mordecai, a Jew, had refused to bow down to him. Esther revealed her heritage to the King who recognizes that Hamman deserves to be hanged. This holiday is celebrated with conspicuous consumption of wine.

Hannukah, or The Festival of Lights, celebrates the miraculous burning of one day's worth of oil to burn for eight days. Judah Maccabee led a revolt against Antiochus IV, who had ordered that the alter of the Jewish temple be desecrated by requiring the sacrifice of pigs (a non-kosher animal). Judah won back the temple and it was rededicated. The rededication required the lighting of the menorah, however there was only enough oil for one night. Miraculously, it burned for eight days.

SYMBOL OF SIKHISM



*Reminding humanity that: “all must die”,
The ‘Khanda’ represents the ultimate reality of ‘death’
that must consume all mortals:
an irrefutable TRUTH.*

There are two swords on the sides, symbolizing temporal and spiritual powers, and the double-edged sword in the middle represents wisdom and knowledge; the ‘circle’ symbolizes death.

SIKH PRAYER

*You are the Lord, we pray to You.
You have favored us with our being and our body.*

*You are our mother and father;
we are Your progeny.
In Your Grace, lie many comforts and luxuries.*

*Nobody can ascertain the limits of Your Glory.
O' Lord, You are higher than the highest.
The whole creation rests upon Your support.*

*Whatever has sprung from You,
follows Your command.*

*God, Your ways are mysterious.
Pleads Nanak: "I'm your loving, ardent devotee".*

SIKHISM

at a glance

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that was revealed to Guru Nanak, the Sikh Prophet, around 1501 C.E. It presents a unique message of love and tolerance for all humanity. Sikhism brought about a revolution by awakening the gullible, ignorant masses that were being exploited by the Hindu priestly class, the Brahmins, and who were oppressed by the tyranny of the Moslem invaders, the Mughals and the Afghans. Through the realization that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God, the subjugated masses rebelled against the status quo, stemming the tide of oppression for the first time in 3000 years of South Asian history. The Sikh Prophets, using the Divine Revelation of God's Word as their inspiration, changed the course of history of South Asia, and (by implication), of the history of the world.

In order to achieve success in their noble mission, the Sikh Gurus practiced what they preached. They sacrificed their own lives and embraced martyrdom. Their innumerable disciples emulated their example by becoming equally valiant, and by laying down their lives for righteousness. The entire history of Sikhism is replete with sagas of martyrdom, for nurturing the sapling, planted by the Gurus. The postulates of Sikhism emphasize that the ultimate goal of a human-being is not a vision of God that culminates in re-absorption of the individual into the absolute reality, but the emergence of a race of God-conscious people, who remain earth-aware and thus operate in the mundane world of phenomena, with the object of transforming and spiritualizing it into a higher and more abundant plane of existence. As the Sikh scripture declares, "The God-conscious person is animated with an intense desire to do good in this world."

Miracles

Miracles abounded in the life and times of the Founder, Guru Nanak through the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Gurdwaras are now erected at places associated with these miracles, where the occurrences can be verified today.

- **The Indelible Imprint:** One of the most acclaimed of these is Panja Sahib, Pakistan, where Guru Nanak's hand has left an indelible imprint on a rock in the village of Batala, Punjab State.
- **The Wall that wouldn't fall:** A weak wall, erected to kill Guru Nanak, while he sat near it, stands even today, after five centuries.
- **Stone as Wax:** Guru Nanak's figurine has been framed in a rock, as if it were wax. Located in Ladakh region of Jammu & Kashmir, India.
- **Bitter into Sweet:** One branch of a tree gives sweet fruit, as a result of Guru Nanak's glance, while all other branches continue retaining their bitter nature. Location: Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh in India.
- **The Mobile mosque:** A plate bearing reference to this incident, related with the visit of Guru Nanak, is preserved, reverentially, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Innumerable other miracles cannot be listed here, for paucity of print-space.

It is amazing to note that some two centuries before scientists had even discovered the telescope, Guru Nanak, through Revelation and spiritual powers, determined that many other planets, suns and moons existed. Furthermore, he conclusively elaborated upon the complexities of the creation of the universe, as written in the Sikh Scripture. It is quite a coincidence that as we write this, newspapers in America corroborate his statement, made over five centuries, ago, regarding the possibility of the existence of many suns, moons and life on other planets.

The Guru & The Sikh

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev, was born in 1469 A.D., at Village Talwandi, near Lahore (now in Pakistan). Nanak was greatly inclined towards spirituality, even at that tender young age. Guru, in Sikh terminology, means a Prophet and a world-teacher. Sikhism is a prophetic religion based on a definitive revelation like Semitic religions of the west, and therefore, can be clearly distinguished from the eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, which have an anonymous mysticism as their source of validity.

Guru Nanak's encounter with God is described, metaphorically, in the *Janamsakhis* (textual-narrations, pertaining to his birth-lore) in the following words: "As God willed, Nanak, his devotee, was escorted to His presence, to the Divine Presence, and then a cup filled with Liquid of Immortality was given to him, accompanied by the command: Nanak, pay attention. This is the cup of holy adoration of my Name; drink it. I am with you, and you do I bless and exalt. Go, rejoice in my Name, the Name of God, and preach to others to do the same. Let this be your calling."

The term "Sikh" originates from ancient Pali texts, where the word "Sikho," is used for a 'searcher of truth'. A Sikh of Guru Nanak also strives to destroy the wall of nescience that separates him or her from Truth. "How will the Truth become known and how will the wall of nescience be pierced?" asks Guru Nanak in the first chapter of the Sikh scripture. He then answers: "It is possible, by following the Will of God and by being in tune with the Cosmic Law, we will be able to grasp Reality".

The Sikh Gurus wrote their revelations in various languages and dialects so they would be accessible to people without any intermediaries. Through this act, Sikhism rejected the priestly class of the time, which tried to control the religious practices of the people by writing all religious texts in Sanskrit, an ancient

language that is difficult to understand. For the first time, a religion in the Eastern world offered access to God without the priestly class.

To understand the emergence and expansion of Sikhism, in true perspective, it is imperative that the prevailing conditions (and their ramifications) be studied.

Role of Women and Family

Islam and Hinduism were the two predominant faiths in the Indian subcontinent when Guru Nanak received his ministry from God. Hindus were absorbed in practices that are strongly condemned by Sikhism: idol-worship; female infanticide; sati (forcible burning of a widow on her husband's funeral-pyre); and the "devadasi" system, where girls who had attained puberty would be used to satiate the carnal desires of the Brahmin priests. Polygamy was rampant; a man could have as many wives as he desired, and innumerable concubines. Women widows could not remarry. Young teen-aged girls were marrying off forcibly. Women had no access to education. Animals and even humans, especially virgin teenage girls approaching puberty would be considered "most acceptable to the presiding-deity" of a tribe or of a family.

Sikhs do not adhere to any of those practices because of Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Prophet, who was a great defender of women's rights. He encouraged widow remarriage and banned the horrific practice of sati. Sikhs believe men and women are equal.

"From woman, man is born; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, future generations come. When his woman dies; he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound. So why call her low? From her, kings

are born. From woman, woman is born; without her, there would be no one at all.” (SGGS pg. 473)

Woman, as per Mahan Kosh, have 32 virtues over men which include; humility, selfless service, compassion, contentment, mercy, patience, and others. It is perhaps because of these qualities, that in many places in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, when Gurus had to show their extreme closeness to God, they presented themselves as female.

“The female is in the male, and the male is in the female. Understand this, O God-realized being! The meditation is in the music, and knowledge is in meditation. Become a devotee and speak the language of love, faith and trust (with, and in, God).” (SGGS pg.879)

Basic Tenets & Theology

Sikhism is a monotheistic faith and a revealed religion which shares many similarities with the Semitic traditions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, Sikhism does not believe in the doctrine of Original Sin; nor does it believe in a Heaven or a Hell. Sikhism preaches that we are rewarded or punished, according to our actions in this lifetime; we reap what we sow. Human life is precious because it is our opportunity to meet God, while living on this earth. Through good actions and by endeavoring to love humanity, we achieve Self-Realization. God is not a distant reality; God resides within us and pervades all of creation. God is, both, Immanent and Transcendent.

“Some sing your praises thinking you are Transcendent; others praise you thinking you are Immanent”. (SGGS pg. XXXXX)

Sikhs are distinct from Hindus and Muslims, from all angles, including religious practices, ceremonies, festivals, social customs and traditions.

"Guru Nanak [the Sikh Prophet] recognizes no authority, no doctrine, except that directly revealed to him by God."
(SGGS pg.599)

Since the Gurus wanted to have an enduring impact, and not just a superficial one, it took 10 Gurus a period of over 250 years to “condition the soul and spirit” of their followers, to face the tyrant rulers and the barbaric intruders with courage and fortitude. Cowardice and indifference was effectively replaced with courage and bravery. The basic tenets of Sikh Faith are: prayer and meditation, honest living, generosity, compassion and sharing, humility and patience.

Other important planks on which rests the Sikh Faith are: equality of all religions, universal harmony, peace and tolerance. Service to humanity is emphasized. Hair is a symbol of saintliness, and a reminder of God’s design. It’s a must for a Sikh man and a woman to retain unshorn hair, and to refrain from adultery, and the use of drugs and other intoxicants like alcohol, cocaine, tobacco, opium, marijuana, etc. Lust, too, has been termed an addiction. It is a major religious and spiritual diktat, for a Sikh not to live on alms or donations. Furthermore, a Sikh considers it to be a psychological trauma, and a social stigma, accepting monetary benefits, which one has not worked to earn.

Repudiation of Rituals

In Sikhism, there is no place for idolatry (statue, icons, symbols, or photographs) or human-worship. Ritualism and superficial fanfare related to ceremonies has been denounced. Superstitious beliefs related to so-called specific auspicious days and dates have been

negated. The Gurus command that all days have been made by God; therefore, all are equally auspicious; all humanity is created by the Lord; therefore all are equal. The time when one remembers God is auspicious and the place where one remembers God is sacred. No time or place can be sacred in itself.

Non-Violence

Sikhs are a peace-loving people. Non-violence, which enforces a strict prohibition against the use of arms under any circumstances, however, has no place in Sikhism. The Sikh Prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, declares, “When all peaceful means fail, to take up the sword is a lawful imperative, to contain the oppressor”. He further states, “I would confront and oppose that what is evil, to destroy it or to subdue it, or die fighting against it, with dignity.”

The fifth and the ninth Gurus were Martyrs; the four teenaged sons of the 10th Guru were Martyrs (the younger ones, aged 7 and 9 were bricked alive; the older ones, 15 and 17, performed the supreme sacrifice on the battlefield, facing ruthless seasoned warriors), and they embraced death, as did innumerable of their followers, for upholding the birthright of their choice of practicing the religion of their choice. They preferred death to a life of slavery and subjugation. There is no sign of ‘suffering’ on the faces of the Martyrs; no repentance, no regrets.

The Scripture

The teachings of Sikh Gurus and Saints, in the form of poetic compositions have been compiled in the Sikh Scripture, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS). This 1430 page volume is reverentially placed on an elevated pedestal in the Gurdwara (Sikh Church). The Holy Book was written, compiled and edited by the Gurus, during their lifetimes. It is noteworthy that out of all the

scriptures of religions of the world, it is the only scripture written by the same person who received the Revelation.

The Tenth and the last Sikh Prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, transferred his authority to the Sikh scripture and to the collectivity of the committed Sikhs, known as the Khalsa. This is the condominium of Guru Granth and Guru Khalsa Panth. The spirit of the Ten Sikh Prophets resides in the mystic body of the Khalsa, while their light resides in the Sikh scripture. The Sarbat Khalsa, an assemblage of representative Sikhs from all over the world, takes major decisions affecting the Sikh nation in consonance with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. The Sarbat Khalsa has the responsibility to keep the Sikh personal law dynamic and address new issues as they arise.

The tenth Guru, in his wisdom, did not deem it appropriate to include his own autobiography and his poetic encomiums for God in the SGGS, at par with his predecessors. There is a lot of controversy about the contents of the Dasam Granth, and an overwhelming majority of Sikh Saints, theologians, scholars, and preachers, hold the firm conviction that several ‘additions’ were made to his original works by vested interests, with an ulterior motive of neutralizing the worldview that the Sikhs have a unique and distinct identity, thereby wrongly attempting to present the Sikhs as part of Hinduism.

‘Gurdwara’ (House of Worship)

Gurdwara, which literally means “a door to the Guru,” is the focal point for all Sikh congregations. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Prophet, established the institution to organize Sikhs on a local level. Since the Sikh doctrine does not allow separation between spiritual and temporal affairs, all political movements affecting Sikhs have been launched from Gurdwaras. Some of the best examples are the Sikh non-violent fight against British aggression in the 1920s and against Indira Gandhi’s military rule, known as

the Emergency, in 1970s. Even though the latter affected the entire country, out of a country of almost billion people, only the Sikhs, who are just two percent of the total population, found courage to oppose tyranny.

There is no ordained priestly class in Sikhism. All Sikhs are expected to read prayers, sing hymns and perform other services. Both women and men can participate in all services and can occupy any administrative positions. As a mark of respect, all devotees must enter the Gurdwara after taking off their footwear and with their heads covered. They bow in front of the Sikh scripture and then sit down to listen to the devotional hymns. It is important to note that the act of genuflection in front of the Sikh scripture is not idol worship. A Sikh bows to the message contained in the scripture and not to a book. Genuflection in front of the Sikh scripture indicates submission to the Word of God. Later, the Congregation stands up in prayer and at the conclusion of the services, partakes of *langar*, which is any type of food prepared with love and devotion by the community.

The tradition of *langar* was started by Guru Nanak, and was institutionalized by Guru Amar Dass, the third Sikh Prophet. All were required to partake of *langar* before interviewing the Guru. Before this policy was put into effect, many Hindu Brahmins would come and meet the Guru, but not eat with the “lower-caste” women and men in the Guru’s congregation. This bold initiative ended all hypocrisy and confirmed equality between all humanity, as all were forced to eat together. Even a Mughal Emperor, Akbar, partook of *langar* while sitting on the floor with common people before he could meet with the Guru. *Langar* inspires and promotes the spirit of disinterested action, *sewa*, in a Sikh and therefore must be cooked by the community and cannot be catered from a restaurant. By catering the food, an artificial distinction between rich and poor is created. Such a distinction repudiates the very purpose of *langar* and is antithetical to Sikhism. The Gurdwara services are performed on all occasions: birth, naming, graduation, commencement of a business-venture, baptism, during weddings, thanksgiving or during sad occasions such as death. The entire

Congregation, without distinction of class or creed, enjoys equal status and all are required to sit on the floor to partake of the holy food. No Gurdwara, anywhere in the world (and there are several thousands of them) has been recorded as having been “closed” or “sold.” This is a very unique aspect of the followers of Sikhism, who are famous for sacrificing their all for the welfare of humanity.

Contributions of the 10 Sikh Gurus

As it has been asserted before, the Sikh Scripture declares that the Ten Sikh Gurus were a manifestation of one Divine Light that passed on from one prophet to the next. Even though they changed bodies, the light remained intact and they preached the same message though out the 250 years of their sojourn on this earth.

Guru Nanak Dev, the Founder of Sikhism, brought about a revolution in the eastern world. He opposed tyranny and exploitation. He rebelled against futile practices, empty rituals and superstitions. God sent him as a Prophet to reveal Sikhism to the Humanity. Guru Nanak was probably the first Human Rights activist known to the Eastern world. The ruling emperor, Babur, imprisoned him when he opposed tyranny of the invader. The three basic tenets of Sikhism, as declared by Guru Nanak, are: (1) earn your livelihood with honesty, (2) constantly remember God through devotion and activism and (3) share your earnings with the needy. The Guru, who was exceedingly tolerant of other faiths, embraced all of humanity as the children of one God.

Guru Angad Dev, the second Sikh Prophet, gave definitive shape to a new alphabet, Gurmukhi, that was to replace all existing scripts. The new script was easy to read and the common people, without the use of any intermediaries, could now read and understand Guru Nanak’s message. He also strengthened the Sikh congregations and preached God’s revelation relentlessly.

Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Prophet, was a great defender of women's rights. Over thirty percent of the preachers appointed to preach the message of Sikhism were women. He also appointed female bishops. He institutionalized the Sikh tradition of Langar or community kitchen, and enforced equality in all Sikh congregations. He encouraged widow remarriage and banned the horrific practice of sati, where women are forced to be burned with the funeral pyre of their dead husbands.

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Sikh Prophet, founded the spiritual Sikh capital, Amritsar, and started work on the world-famous Golden-Temple, to place emphasis upon the spiritual way of living. His hymns, as recorded in the Sikh scripture, have a breathtaking theme of humility.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Prophet, was a literary-giant, who undertook the work of compiling the Sikh scripture. He included the hymns of Hindu and Muslim Saints without discrimination in the Sikh scripture. He was martyred for refusing to embrace Islam. The extent of barbaric-torture was such that he was boiled in a cauldron containing water, and hot sand was poured upon his head, during scorching summers. Yet, he prayed blissfully, his face radiant.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Prophet, was groomed by Guru Arjan to become a warrior-saint. He implemented Guru Nanak's doctrine of double-sovereignty that deems spiritual and temporal affairs are of equal importance. A Sikh must strive to excel both spiritually and temporally, always subordinating politics to ethics. The Guru created the Sikh seat of sovereignty, the Akaal Takhat, which is comparable to the Vatican. However, the head of the Akaal Takhat is just a mouthpiece of the Sikh commonwealth, and all of his directives must be a result of decisions taken by the Khalsa Panth, the committed Sikhs all over the world.

Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Prophet, was ordered by Guru Hargobind to maintain an army to fight oppression and to continue his mission of preaching the word of God. Arms were to be used as a last resort when all peaceful means of reaching a resolution has failed. He pioneered Ayurvedic free health care.

Guru Harkrishan, the eighth Sikh Prophet, was appointed Guru when barely five years old. He led the masses with grit and determination, displaying rare spiritual-acumen, wisdom and sagacity. He departed from the mortal world when only eight, proving that age has no correlation with spiritual power that is God's Gift, bestowed upon whomsoever God is Gracious. This also is an excellent example of equality, bestowed by the Sikh doctrine, on all human being, men, women and children.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Prophet, is one of the greatest defenders of freedom of conscience ever known to humankind. He preached against the Hindu caste system and repudiated the superiority of the Hindu priestly class, the Brahmins. When the Brahmins were being proselytized to Islam and came to him for help, he gave them a helping hand, and embraced martyrdom. Long before Voltaire was to say, "I might not believe in what you say but I will fight till death for your right to say it," the Guru showed the world that freedom of practice was a cherished gift that ought to be defended. The Guru was a great warrior, but he gave his life peacefully.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Sikh Prophet, gave up everything in his fight against oppression. He sacrificed his four sons, his parents and gave his own life while preaching the message of love. "Hear ye all, I proclaim the truth, only those who love will find God". The Guru was a prolific writer, a poet, a great warrior, a musician, a chef, and had innumerable other talents. His greatest accomplishment is his non-attachment to this world and his ordination committed Sikh, the Khalsa.

The Vaisaakhi of 1699 : Beginning of A Revolutionary Era

The manner in which Guru Gobind Singh gave proof of his thorough knowledge of the art of dramaturgy on the Baisakhi day is fairly well known. He asked for a 'head'; when a brave one offered his head; he was taken inside a tent, and the Guru returned with a blood-soaked sword, asking for another head. The audience was stunned; he repeated the call, four times. Finally, he brought out the five, alive, to the amazement of the assemblage. The five were then administered what is known as the Baptism of the Double-edged Sword (khande di pahul), and were then knighted as Singhs, the Five Beloved Ones, the first members of the Order of the Khalsa, into which the Guru himself begged to be admitted, and was initiated as the sixth.

On this day, a milestone in Sikh history, Guru Gobind Singh transformed Sikhs by giving them their modern form which includes the five articles of Faith that Sikhs wear: (1) unshorn hair, (2) a small wooden comb for the hair, (3) a steel bracelet which signifies a Reality with no beginning and no end, (4) a ceremonial sword indicative of resolve and commitment to justice, and (5) knee-length under-shorts in keeping with the disciplined life-style of a Sikh. Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed a formal code of conduct that forbids adultery and promiscuous sexual behavior, use of drugs and intoxicants, cutting of hair from any part of one's body, female infanticide and consumption of sacrificial meat. Hair, being sacred, was to be kept covered at all times. This required the wearing of turbans and scarves, which are also signs of sovereignty.

Ceremonies & Festivals

It is said within the Sikh Faith there are four important events in any individual's life: birth, initiation, marriage, and death. The significance of birth and death in ones life are obvious. "Amrit", the Initiation ceremony, marks the commencement of 'the journey' symbolizing the aspirant's first step as per the Sikh 'way of life'.

Those who have taken Amrit are called the Khalsa. ‘Anand Karaj’, or marriage, is another significant ceremony. It is a public commitment by two Sikhs to walk on the path of Guru Nanak throughout their lives. The marriage ceremony becomes a spiritual journey undertaken by two lovers of righteousness, striving to achieve Self-Realization.

All other ceremonies, whether child naming, graduation, starting a business-venture or employment are, inevitably, marked by a gathering of relations and friends at a Gurdwara. Holy hymns are recited and Langar is served to the guests.

The major festivals of the Sikhs are “Hola Mohalla,” which is celebrated in March, to observe the change of season by indulging in sports and revelry and “Baisakhi”. “Diwali”, in November, is celebrated to mark the occasion when the sixth Guru secured the release of 52 kings from the prison of India’s Mughal Emperor, Jehangir.

A Brief Sketch of Sikh History

In 1710, the Sikhs set up a republic in the heartland of the Moghul Empire in India, under the leadership of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. At that time, they gave the land to tillers in a feudal society, proclaimed equality of all people as citizens of a state, and declared that power emanated from, and justly belonged to the people and not to a hereditary privileged class.

For fifty years, under the most callous and terrible persecutions where the aim was complete genocide, the Sikhs not only refused to submit to the cruelty of the oppressive Muslim regime, but refused to abandon their cry: “We want liberty or death!” And in the end, once again, they had their liberty. Sikh supremacy was established in the form of ‘Sarbat-Khalsa’, the Sikh Commonwealth, and then it evolved into the form of the Sikh Empire, which was called the ‘Sarkar-i-Khalsa’, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century.

During this period, the Sikh Empire extended from the Jamuna River, the heartland of India, to the modern frontiers of Afghanistan, and from Indus to the Little Tibet, the confines of China. It was in the middle of the nineteenth century when the British perfidiously attacked the Sikh Commonwealth after engineering Sikh palace intrigue, by bribing the Hindu Generals of the Sikh army and the Hindu dominated civil government at Lahore. During the fierce Anglo-Sikh wars, the Sikhs, as a historian says, “brought the British and their Hindu mercenaries to their knees every time.” In pre-British India, the powerful Sikh Emperor, Maharajah Ranjit Singh, is renowned for having sanctioned grants of cash, gold, and land for Hindu Temples, Christian Churches, and Muslim Mosques. He had, under his employ, European courtiers and generals, besides people from all religions and races in India

In the years preceding 1947, the Sikhs played a pivotal role during India’s struggle for freedom. Their active cooperation was enlisted by the Congress Party, which was spearheading the movement under the stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi. At this juncture, promises pertaining to Sikh identity, representation and autonomy, were made by the Congress Party. The Sikhs believed these promises, and plunged head-on into the arena. Out of the 2,175 martyrs for India's freedom, 1,557, or 75% were Sikhs. Out of 2,646 sent to the Andaman’s for life sentence, for asking the British to quit India, 2,147, or 80%, were Sikhs. Out of the 127 Indians who were sent to the gallows by the British, 92, or 80%, were Sikhs. It is recorded in the official British records that whenever the Sikhs were taken to the execution room to be hanged, they were given a chance to apologize and have their life spared, but they preferred dignified death to slavery.

Ever-since independence in 1947, the majority has made persistent, calculated, well planned and regular attempts on cultural and political levels, not only to disintegrate the Sikh people, but also to weaken them economically. Even other minorities (Christians and Muslims) in India have been subjected to maltreatment at the hands of the majority. The promise to frame a Constitution with the consent of the Sikhs was broken three years later, in 1950. Nothing was included therein that bore even the remotest semblance to the fulfillment of the Sikhs’ demand for autonomy

within the framework of the Constitution. Thus, the Sikhs had been tricked into giving up their right to sovereignty after playing a key role in attaining independence for India. A constitution was framed paving the way for a highly centralized government in the hands of the majority community, completely denying the Sikh religious identity and political sovereignty.

Continued frustration due to unfulfilled promises made by the Indian government in 1947, led the Sikhs to start a peaceful movement, resulting in several thousands filling the jails, over the span of a quarter of a century. To crush the non-violent independence movement, the government deployed ruthless tactics. In retaliation to the injustice meted out, this agitation assumed the form of a Sikh independence movement to breakaway from the Union of India. In 1984, an army operation was launched on the Golden Temple and 37 other Sikh shrines, killing several thousand Sikhs. Over 200,000 innocent Sikhs were killed in the aftermath of this operation, and thousands are still languishing in jails, without trial. The irony of the situation is that even after 18 years, several thousand Sikh widows, sitting in the slums of Delhi, are still awaiting justice, while the killers were given Ministerial berths. The Indian State has subdued all attempts by Amnesty International and local human rights groups like the People's Commission.

Section 1

ONE CREATOR

Is there a God? Yes, indeed, we are all creations of the Creator. Now the question arises, how do we believe this? It is often said: "Seeing is believing". That, however, is not true. Seeing is a human sense that allows one to visually perceive physical manifestations. Believing is choosing to accept one opinion as more credible, more believable, than another. Religion is based on belief. Faith is not the same as facts.

Judaism emphasizes God is good. If God were a human being, complete goodness is one thing we wouldn't expect of Him. In the course of history, we've seen that the maxim of Lord Acton as it applies to man is invariably correct: "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Having experienced some really tyrannical and authoritative monarchs and governments, it is remarkable, therefore, that Abraham gave us not only the gift of belief in one God, but the concept of ethical monotheism as well. The very word 'God', in English, is a contraction of the longer word "good". God, who could be anything, chose to be good. So strongly does Judaism hold this to be true that the Bible records one of the most remarkable debates between the Almighty and man.

Theologians ask: "If God wants the people to believe Him, why doesn't He manifest Himself, clearly? Why doesn't He appear in full resplendent glory, so that none could ever dispute His existence?" The answer is simple: "If God were to do that, none would believe in Him, per se; people would, instead, be forced to accept His reality, to put it mildly. That is why proof of God's existence not only isn't possible, it isn't even desirable. If, by proof we mean incontrovertible evidence or a demonstration, in scientific jargon, God would remain, forever, undiscovered.

On the other hand, if, by proof we mean proving the most logical of two alternatives, neither of which can be ascertained and justified to the people as factual and irrefutable evidence, then God can be "proven", as the more logical of two possibilities.

God is an experience of affirmation of hope and peace, of a blissful radiance and fragrance. God is serene tranquility.

God is the paramount power, the insurmountable. He is beyond the experiences of life and death, of joy and sorrow, of victory and defeat. And, God is beyond the realms of human knowledge and comprehension. He is attainable by virtue of His own grace (if that is forthcoming from Him) being bestowed on a devotee. He cannot be reached by persistence and penance. Meditation is the sunlit-path to the glorious destination. God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is all pervasive, in creations and creatures, in all mass and matter, in space and in water, on land and in the air. He is, in essence, in each particle and in each atom. Therefore, the inference is that God is Transcendental & Immanent, both, at once, simultaneously. Before the Creation was effected, God was present, all by Himself, in a self-absorbed state of being.

“He has no form, no shape, no color; God is beyond the three qualities. They alone understand Him, O Nanak, with whom He is pleased.” [SGGS 283].

“God is beyond the limitations of form or shape, or of social class or race. These humans believe that He is distant; but He is quite obviously and apparently very close (in fact He resides within each creature). He enjoys His presence in every heart, and no filth sticks to Him, and He is blemish-less. He is the blissful and infinite primal Lord; His light is all pervading. Among all divine beings, He is the most divine, Creator-architect, rejuvenator of all. How can Nanak’s single tongue worship and adore Him? He is the eternal, imperishable Entity. One whom He unites with the True Guru — such a person’s generations are redeemed. All His servants serve Him, and Nanak is the most humble servant at His door.” [SGGS 1096]

“Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Deut. 6)

Judaism began with Abraham, who recognized one God as the Creator of the world.

“Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” (Malachi 2)

The ‘Big Bang’ theory of creation, accepted by most scientists today, agrees with the Judaic teaching that the universe came into being “out of nothingness, out of a void”, but does not venture to offer any judgment about how it happened.

It insists that God, the Creator is, undoubtedly, “only one”, a belief in monotheism that rejects, outright, the “many gods” of paganism, the “three persons” of the Trinity, and the “two gods” of dualism.

God is also the caretaker. He is a God who maintains a close, ongoing personal relationship with every one of His creations. Ethical monotheism views the all-powerful God as a being who, voluntarily, chooses to be guided solely by the principles of truth, kindness and justice.

“God is One, His Name is Truth, He is the Creator, He is the fearless One, He does not bear animosity towards anyone, He is beyond the cycle of birth and death, and He is the benevolent grace.” [SGGS 1]

“As much as the word of God is in the mind, so much is His melody; as much as the form of the universe is, so much is His body. He is the tongue, and He is the nose. Do not speak of any other. My Lord and Master is One (God). He is the One and Only; He is the One alone, proclaims Nanak.” [SGGS 350]

“The various gods and goddesses, in various religions and cultures are, in reality, only mere manifestations of the One and Only God. He Himself is the Doer of deeds.” [SGGS 908]

“The One and Only Creator of the universe is all-pervading. All shall once again merge into the One. His One form has one, and many colors; He leads all according to His One word.” [SGGS 1310]

“Describe the Lord as the One, the One and Only. How rare are those who know the taste of this essence. The Glories of the Lord of the Universe cannot be known, proclaims Nanak: He is totally amazing and wonderful!” [SGGS 299]

The emphasis is on the message of One God. Hence, the various manifestations of the powers of God cannot be misconstrued as being God. They only represent certain attributes of God, which emanate from Him, and could never be an independent ‘persona’ or entity.

“But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king; at His anger the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.” (Jeremiah 10)

“Now, for a long time Israel has been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without.” (Torah. Chr. II: 15)

“Pilgrimages, austere discipline, compassion and charity—these, by themselves, bring only an iota of merit. Listening and believing with love and humility in one’s mind, one cleanses oneself with the Name, at the sacred shrine deep within. All virtues are the Lord’s, humans have none at all. None has the ability to decipher the Lord’s coded limits. The time of the Creation of the Universe is not known to any religious Priests, or to the Yogis. One who claims to know everything shall not be decorated in the world hereafter.” [SGGS 4]

To realize and to know truth, the exact nature of falsehood needs to be understood in the correct perspective.

“False are body, wealth and all relations. False are ego, possessiveness and Maya (Illusion). False are power, youth, wealth and property. False are sexual desire and wild anger. False are chariots, elephants, horses and expensive clothes. False are deception, emotional attachment and egotistical pride. False is self-conceit. Only devotional worship is permanent, constant and Truth. Nanak lives by meditating on the Lotus Feet of the Lord. False are the ears, which listen to the slander of others. False are the hands, which steal the wealth of others. False are the eyes, which gaze, stealthily upon the beauty of another’s wife. False is the tongue, which enjoys delicacies and external tastes. False are the feet, which run to do evil to others. False is the mind, which covets the wealth of others. False is the body, which does not do good to others. Without understanding, everything is false. Blessed is that body, says Nanak, that remembers the Lord’s Name.” [SGGS 268]

The Supreme One is a reality. Truth, fact or reality exists at two planes: mental and material. Mind observes the universe through the medium of the senses, and all that is observed is a reality. Matter, too, is a realistic-entity. And, human beings are a combination of mind, matter, spirit and intelligence. All of these, together, constitute Truth. God, alone, is the undisputed, unchallenged, Truth.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, nor is He weary? There is no searching of His understanding.” (Isaiah 40)

“I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” (Isaiah 43)

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw near, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them.” (Ecc. 12)

“His word created everything.” [SGGS 3]

God is the creator of nature. God’s grace is also part of His nature; so:

“By His nature we see, by His nature we hear; by His nature we have fear, and the essence of happiness. By His nature the nether worlds exist, and the ethereal ones; by His nature the entire creation exists. By His nature the Holy Scriptures of the Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Islamic religions are compiled. By His nature all deliberations are held. By His nature we eat, drink and dress; by His nature all love exists. By His nature come the species of all kinds and colors; by His nature the living beings of the world exist. By His nature virtues exist, and by His nature vices exist. By His nature come honor and dishonor. By His nature wind, water and fire exist; by His nature earth and dust exist. Everything is in Your nature, Lord; He is the all-powerful Creator. His Name is the holiest of the holy. Says Nanak: Through the command of His will, He beholds and pervades the creation; He is absolutely unrivalled.” [SGGS 464]

“He fashioned the creation; seated within the creation, He beholds it with delight. He is the giver and the creator; by His pleasure, He bestows His mercy. He is the knower of all; He gives life, and takes it away, again with a single word (command). Seated within the creation, He beholds it with delight.” [SGGS 463]

“He himself is the Creator. Everything that happens is His doing. There is none except Him. He designed the creations; He beholds it and He understands it. Says servant Nanak: The Lord is revealed to the aspirant-soul, who is God-loving, such a one is the living expression of the Guru’s word.” [SGGS 12]

“And he prayed to the Lord, and said, I pray you, O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I hastened to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and that you repent of the evil.” (Yona 4)

“For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your children shall find compassion with those who led them away captive, so that they shall return to this land; for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him.” (Chronicles II: 30)

When God informed Abraham that He is about to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, for their wickedness, Abraham has the absolute gall to say to His majesty: “Will the judge of the whole world not act justly?” What about the innocent people in these cities, Abraham is curious to learn? It’s as if Abraham is lodging a complaint with God, about His own actions; God is the ‘culprit’ and the ‘judge’, in the eyes of defendant Abraham.

Steeped as we are in centuries old traditional thinking that God is righteous, we may not tend to easily believe that God could be unjust. Imagine how daring it must have been for Abraham to challenge God’s supremacy, especially when it was the ‘order of the times and it was in the fitness of things’, for even a mortal king to do as he pleased in a flamboyantly dictatorial manner. Abraham accepted God as the Creator of the whole universe, yet he was unwilling to believe that this same God might act in an unjust fashion! God, for a Jew, can be held for his commitment to justice. What is even more striking is the fact the God agreed with Abraham’s viewpoint.

”True is the Master, true is His Name—speak it with infinite love. People beg and pray, and the Great Giver distributes His gifts so very magnanimously and in abundance. So, what offering can we place before Him, by which we might have an exclusive audience, with Him? What words can we speak to evoke His love? In the ambrosial hours before dawn, chant the True Name, and contemplate upon His glorious greatness. By the karma of past actions, the magnificently exquisite robe (this physical body) is obtained. By His grace, the Gate of Liberation is found. Know this well: the True One Himself is all.” [SGGS 2]

“His blessings are so abundant that there can be no written account of them. The Great Giver does not hold back anything. There are so many great, heroic warriors begging at the door of the infinite Lord. So many creations contemplate and dwell upon Him, that they cannot be counted. So many perish, engaged in corruption. So many enjoy His bounties, and then deny receiving. So many foolish consumers keep on consuming. So many endure distress, deprivation and constant abuse. Even these are Your gifts, O Great Giver! Liberation from bondage comes only by Your will. No one else has any say. If some fool should presume that he does have a say, he shall learn, and feel the effects of his folly. He Himself knows, He Himself gives. Few, and rarest of the rare, are those who acknowledge this.” [SGGS 5]

God clarifies: “Abraham, you didn’t understand; if there would, indeed, be a minimum number of good people in these wicked cities, I wouldn’t be able to destroy them”. The Bible later reveals what lay at the core of God’s nature and character.

“His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without inequity; just and right is He.” (Deut. 32:4)

When Moses asks God to share with him a little bit more about His personality, God lets him know His attributes: “The Lord, the Lord, a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, rich in steadfast kindness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; acquitting the penitent.” (Exodus 34:6-7)

The Rabbis say, if that’s what it means to be God, say the Rabbis, then these attributes must be holy. If God is good, then humankind has to imitate Him. And that’s why adding the adjective “ethical” to the belief in monotheism is, probably, the most relevant of all the Jewish beliefs about God.

“Everyone makes mistakes, but God and His messengers are infallible.” [SGGS 60]

“Do not blame the sovereign Lord; when someone grows old, his intellect leaves him. The blind man talks and babbles, and then falls into the ditch. All that the perfect Lord does is perfect; there is not too little, or too much. Says Nanak: The God-loving person merges into the perfect Lord.” [SGGS 1412]

Do not become like the infirm or the blind, while you have all faculties, intact, to reason out issues.

This unison and harmonious blend between God and man, is termed; communion. In such a state, one does not criticize God's decisions and refrains from denying His existence.

“The supreme Lord, the transcendent Lord, the True Guru, saves all. Hence, it is unbecoming to criticize God's decisions, his ways and his works. Says Nanak: Without the Guru, no one crosses over the turbulent life-ocean; this is the perfect essence of all contemplation.” [SGGS.611]

Section 2

REDEEM YOURSELF

“The brook of Kishon swept them away, that ancient brook, the brook Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength.” (Judges 5)

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2)

“And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless you before I die.” (Genesis 27)

“When you take the census of the people of Israel according to their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul to the Lord, when you count them; that there should be no plague among them, when you count them.” (Exodus 30)

“And if a soul sins, and hears the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of it; if he does not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity.” (Leviticus 5)

“But if the priest buys any soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and he who is born in his house; they shall eat of his bread.” (Lev. 22)

“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.” (Deut. 30)

“When my soul fainted inside me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to You, to Your holy temple.” (Yona 2)

“Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; let him tread down my life on the earth, and lay my honor in the dust.” (Selah. Psalms 7)

“The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him” (Lam. 3)

“By His command, bodies are created; His command cannot be described. By His command, souls come into being; by His Command, glory and greatness are obtained. By His command, some are high and some are low; by His written command, pain and pleasure are obtained. Some, by His command, are blessed and forgiven; others, by His command, wander aimlessly forever. Everyone is subject to His command.” [SGGS 1]

“Says Nanak: That Lord alone is the Husband of all. She, upon whom He casts His glance of grace, becomes the happy soul-bride.” [SGGS 351]

“The chamber of the soul is so dark, without the Name of the Lord.” [SGGS 355]

“Without the Name, the soul does not even exist.” [SGGS 354]

“My soul does not stay held by the Merciful Lord. It is greedy, deceitful, sinful and hypocritical, and totally attached to worldly attachments.” [SGGS 360]

“But the soul is neither young nor old, O siblings of destiny.” [SGGS 378]

“Forever and ever, the soul is illumined; in the Saadh Sangat congregation, the company of the holy.” [SGGS 378]

“Crimson, crimson, crimson — this is the color of the soul-bride who is imbued with the love of her beloved.” [SGGS 739]

“The account is kept for every second, every instant; the soul suffers for the bad and the good. O Nanak, the angelic beings are united with the word of the God; this is the way God made it.” [SGGS 1110]

Judaism

TRUST

“And the bramble said to the trees, ‘If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.’” (Judges 9)

“Trust you not in lying words, saying, ‘the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.’” (Jeremiah 7)

“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who trust in the mountain of Samaria, who are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come!” (Amos 6)

“Do not trust your friend; do not put your confidence in a guide; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom.” (Micha 7)

“And I will leave in your midst a poor and lowly people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.” (Tzeephania 3)

“Worship in purity, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, for in a little while His wrath will blaze. Happy are all who put their trust in Him.” (Psalms 2)

“All these who were chosen to be gatekeepers of the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were registered by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer established in their office of trust.” (Chr. I: 9)

“The Name of the Lord, is a jewel, a ruby. It brings Truth, contentment and spiritual wisdom. The Lord entrusts the treasures of peace, intuition and kindness to His devotees. This is the treasure of my Lord. Consuming and expending it, it is never used up.” [SGGS 893]

“I worship the One who is worthy of being worshipped. I trust the One who is worthy of being trusted. Like water merging in water, I merge in the Lord. Says Jai Dayv: I meditate and contemplate the Luminous, Triumphant Lord. I am lovingly absorbed in the Nirvaanaa of God.” [SGGS 1106]

“Kings, rulers and monarchs enjoy pleasures and gather the poison of the wealth of others. They do not trust their own children or spouses; they are totally attached to the love of Maya.” [SGGS 1245]

“Why keep what is held in trust for another? Giving it back, peace is found.” [SGGS 1249]

“But there, in the court of the Lord, all beings will be judged. Those who have violated the people’s trust will be disgraced; their noses will be cut off.” [SGGS 1288]

“Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.” (Psalms 4)

“The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer.” (Psalms 6)

“A prayer of David: Hear the right, O Lord, attend to my cry, give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.” (Psalms 17)

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not keep silence at my tears; for I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, like all my fathers were.” (Psalms 39)

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight.” (Proverbs 15)

“He who turns away his ear from hearing the Torah, even his prayer shall be abomination.” (Proverbs 28)

“Also when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.” (Lamentations 3)

“You have covered yourself with a cloud, so that our prayer should not pass through.” (Lamentations 3)

“And I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” (Daniel 9)

“And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.’” (Chronicles II: 7)

“Praying for anything other than Your Grace, O Lord, leads me from one problem to another. Bless me that the hunger in my mind is quenched, once and for all.” [SGGS 958]

The three pillars of the Rock-like steadfast "Monument of Prayer" are: service, meditation, and total surrender of one's ego.

God confers solace and fearlessness. Prayer is an essential ingredient of the "Faith-in-God" Doctrine, which emphasizes that God is, always, right. Doubt should not be permitted to creep in, on this count. Hence, one must pray to God, the source and the light, at all times, day or night, in joy or sorrow, and on all significant occasions, like birth, naming-ceremony, wedding, death, commencement of educational or business ventures. Pray to God, at all times, in prosperity or adversity. The concept of prayer is engrained in the Sikh psyche and belief-structure. It says that God is not a law of nature, alone, nor of Karma, or of pre-determination, alone. It is, in essence, all of these, together, and even much more. His grace can modify/amend the negative-writ, to rescue the bereaved one, who is, now, praying and wailing, in agony, for help. The Savior is omnipresent and all pervasive. Hence, we see that God is transcendental and immanent, both, at once. After crossing the barriers, hindrances and obstacles of physical desires, material gains and mental traumas, one is forced to (there's no alternative available, there's no other strategy to be employed) pray to the Lord, for express grant of sublime and pristine grace. This, then, is the finality of spiritual elevation. Prayer, when coupled with sincere meditative-contemplation, becomes an extremely potent force, that could radically alter the prevailing scenario, thereby bringing about a positive transformation, in the life of the devotee. The deity is in the heart and soul, and is not to be searched, anywhere else.

“When Pharaoh shall speak to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle’; then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod, and throw it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.’” (Exodus 7)

“Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not listened to my voice.” (Num 14)

“And His miracles, and His acts, which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and to all his land.” (Deut 11)

“The great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles.” (Deut 29)

“And Gideon said to him, ‘Oh my Lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this befallen us and where are all his miracles? Our fathers told us of them, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.’” (Judges 6)

“Without enshrining God’s name in the heart, miracles and occultism is futile and undesirable.” [SGGS 593]

“If one were to become a Siddha (a celibate, a monk) and work miracles, summon wealth and become invisible and visible at will so that people would hold me in awe and esteem, one might go astray and forget the Lord, and His exalted Name would not reside in his mind.” [SGGS 14]

Without godly grace and meditation upon His Name, the mind’s wild horses shall never rest in tranquility and peace. All miracles are God’s handiwork. Success in performing miracles on a superficial plane, does not have any linkage with being a spiritually inclined and/or a religiously oriented individual.

The spiritual power of performing miracles has been used by the great masters, over the ages, all over the world, for the spread of the gospel and the word of God, and the universal message of love and compassion, peace and harmony.

Healing of the tormented mind and the haunted soul, too, has been an important field, where the real Godheads and pious ones have worked wonders, without expecting recognition or reward, power or position for themselves. This classification of miracles is the one required by humanity, in this age of hatred, infested and ridden with violence and greed. The Sikh-Gurus, Hindu Saints and Muslim Pirs whose verses have been included in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, as well as other mystical-spiritual leaders were vociferously against the negative forms of miracles, not subscribing to the idea that someone possessing miraculous powers would, necessarily, be an enlightened soul. Of course, there could be enlightened souls having powers, but they do not exercise these powers, for they feel that would be tantamount to interference in Godly regimentation, laws, discipline, natural order.

“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.” (Isaiah 14)

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? Said the Lord, ‘I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of male goats.’” (Isaiah 1)

“May the Lord fulfill his purpose for me! Your loving kindness, O Lord, endures for ever; do not forsake the works of your own hands.” (Psalms 138)

“And the land shall tremble and writhe in pain; for every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.” (Jeremiah 51)

“Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the purpose of the Almighty?” (Job 11)

“That He may withdraw man from His purpose, and hide pride from man.” (Job 33)

“I said in my heart, ‘God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.’” (Ecc 3)

“O man you were sent here to gain merit, but you are engrossed in futile activities, and your time is running out.” [SGGS 43]

“First, the baby loves mother’s milk; second, he learns of his mother and father; third, his brothers, sisters and aunts; fourth, the love of play awakens. Fifth, he runs after food and drink; sixth, in his sexual desire, he does not respect social customs. Seventh, he gathers wealth and dwells in his house; eighth, he becomes angry, and his body is consumed. Ninth, he turns gray, and his breathing becomes labored; tenth, he is cremated, and turns to ashes. His companions send him off, crying out and lamenting. The swan of the soul takes flight, and asks which way to go. He came and he went, and now, even his name has died. O Nanak, the self-willed egoistic persons love the darkness. Without the Guru, the world is drowning.” [SGGS 137]

The ideals or purposes, of life, undergo a rapid transformation, in consonance with the change and variance in socio-economic and politico-religious environment and conditions, cultural background, levels of education/literacy, God-gifted talents and intelligence, and of course, with advancing age. Hence, it can be safely inferred and assumed that the purpose of life, for an infant, would surely differ from that of an adult or of an aged-person. Priorities shift automatically, in accordance with the change in scenario. Another significant determining factor is that the human species has come of age after millions of years of evolvement, commencing the journey from the most primitive of creations of the Lord almighty. Advances achieved by humans are really commendable, but, in the process, God and spirituality have been relegated to the back seat, with an increasing interest in materialistic values, and pleasures of the senses, which are momentary (sexual-promiscuity, addictions, an insatiable lust and appetite for wealth and power, even at the cost of the annihilating life, on earth.)

Judaism SALVATION & SANCTIFICATION

“Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing is upon your people. Selah.” (Psalms 3)

“Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord shall bring back the exile of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.” (Psalms 14)

“This shall be my salvation; for a hypocrite shall not come before Him.” (Job 13)

“It is good that a man should quietly hope for the salvation of the Lord.” (Lam. 3)

“Sing to the Lord, all the earth; tell of his salvation from day to day.” (Chr.I: 16)

“You shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; do not fear, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them; for the Lord will be with you.” (Chr. II: 20)

“And Saul said, ‘There shall not a man be put to death this day; for today the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel.’” (Samuel II: 11)

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation.” (Isaiah 12)

“Truly from worship in the hills comes delusion, and from the uproar in the mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.” (Jeremiah 3)

“But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed. Salvation belongs to the Lord.” (Yona 2)

“One who, in his soul, loves the will of God, is said to be liberated while yet alive. As is joy, so is sorrow to him. He experiences eternal bliss, and is not separated from God. As is gold, so is dust to him. As is ambrosial nectar, so is bitter poison to him. As is honor, so is dishonor. Such a one treats a pauper and a king alike. Whatever God ordains, is acceptable to such a person.” [SGGS 275]

“The soul-bride is in love with her Husband Lord; she focuses her consciousness on the word of the Guru’s holy hymns. The soul-bride is joyously embellished with the gift of intuition; her hunger and thirst are taken away.” [SGGS 993]

Great emphasis has been laid upon the Doctrine of "Attunement-with-God" (entering into the realm of God-consciousness). This belief relates to the transmigration of the soul, and salvation, thence, would mean total release from the vicious cycle of birth and death. Salvation could be attained, even in the present lifetime, here and now, on our very own planet, instead of the imaginary heavens, after death. It is very much possible that such an ecstatic level or plane is arrived at, but the only condition is that utmost restraint is required to be exercised, over the reins of the wild horses of the senses. "Parampad" (the 4th and highest state of the mind) is, in effect, the quintessential "salvation". The lower three states are: the waking-state, the dream-state, and the dreamless-sleeping-state. Salvation means loving God, with all the intensity and faith, at one’s disposal, so as to arrive in the fragrantly wonderful zone of "Communion with God". Grace and benediction and benevolence play a far significant role, than Karma alone, towards the realization of this objective. Emancipation is very much possible right here, provided the pleader is sincere in his prayer, approach and inclination and motives.

“And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the people of Israel for a water of sprinkling; it is a purification offering.” (Num 19)

“And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put there in a utensil.” (Num 19)

“And they performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and of Solomon his son.” (Nechemia 12)

“Who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, even though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.” (Chr II: 30)

“When the hands and the feet and the body are dirty, water can wash away the dirt. When the clothes are soiled and stained, soap can wash them clean. But when the intellect is stained and polluted by sin, it can only be cleansed by the love of the Name. Virtue and vice do not come by mere words; actions repeated, over and over again, are engraved on the soul. One is bound to harvest what one sows. Says Nanak: By God’s Command, we come and go in reincarnation.” [SGGS 4]

”When the mind is filthy, everything is filthy; by washing the body, the mind is not cleansed. This world is deluded by doubt; hardly anyone understands this. O’ mind, chant the one Name. The True Guru has given this treasure. Even if one learns the Yogic postures of the Siddhas, and holds his sexual energy in check, still, the filth of the mind is not removed, and the filth of egotism is not eliminated. This mind is not controlled by any other discipline, except the Sanctuary of the True Guru. Meeting the True Guru, one is transformed beyond description. Prays Nanak: One who dies upon meeting the True Guru, shall be rejuvenated through the word of the Guru’s Shabad. The filth of attachment and possessiveness shall depart, and the mind shall become pure.” [SGGS 558]

Just as nobody prefers to sit in close proximity to a person wearing unwashed clothes, similarly a person with a 'sullied' thought-process is shunned by all and sundry for he spreads vitriolic words around, thereby vitiating the environment.

God blesses us in every sphere of life, and by meditating upon His Name, our sagging spirits are rejuvenated, and we are saved. In the company of the holy, filth is washed away. The supreme Lord becomes our companion and benefactor. Continuing to meditate, the primal-being is sure to become the protector, everywhere and for all times to come.

“The wicked works a deceitful deed; but to him who sows righteousness shall be a sure reward.” (Proverbs 11)

“And Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, ‘Come, and let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will perform a deed for us; for there is no restraint upon the Lord to save by many or by few.’” (Samuel I: 14)

“For God shall bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.” (Ecc. 12)

“And the sons of Jacob came from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry, because he had done a vile deed in Israel in lying with Jacob’s daughter; which thing ought not to be done.” (Genesis 34)

“And in very deed for this cause have I raised you up, to show in you My power; and that My Name may be proclaimed throughout all the earth.” (Exodus 9)

“And it was so, that all who saw it said, no such deed was done nor seen from the day that the people of Israel came up from the land of Egypt to this day; consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.” (Judges 19)

“Behold, I will raise them from the place where you have sold them, and will return your deed upon your own head.” (Yael 4)

“Behold among the nations, and regard, and be struck with amazement; for I will perform a deed in your days, that you will not believe if told.” (Chabakuk 1)

“Brother, understand the Lord’s sense of justice: as one sows, so does one reap.” [SGGS 308]

“Nobody is to be blamed, except one’s own actions. Whatever misdeed one performed, for that one has suffered; so, do not blame anyone else.” [SGGS 433]

“All creatures are under the supreme command. According to His will, He commands them. His pen writes out the account of everyone.” [SGGS 1241]

God driveth according to His will; the present life circumstances/conditions that one finds oneself embroiled in, may be attributable to, and traceable to, the innumerable acts of commission and omission during the past life/lives. These may be construed to be in the form and shape of rewards, or penalties, as the case may be. Virtuous deeds, in this lifetime, have the potential of presenting a human being with the invaluable cherished gift, of being spared the agony and ignominy of undergoing transmigration.

“The deluded ones have forsaken God the primal being, the life of the world, and they have come to rely upon mere mortals. In the love of duality, the soul-bride is ruined; around her neck she wears the noose of death. As one sows, so shall one harvest; your destiny is recorded on your forehead.” [SGGS 134]

Worthy deeds (performed on the physical-plane) that are visible to the human-eye, are appreciated and recognized by God, in the form of worldly prestige and honor, that is, also apparent and obvious, to everyone. Honourable deeds on the spiritual plane (that cannot be viewed, even under the most advanced microscope), shall be credited to the account of the pious soul, who shall become the deserving recipient of magnificent accolades and encomiums, in the world, hereafter.

There is a definitive story about Abraham's exemplary servitude towards God, through his service and compassion for fellow humans. This happened when God was on a visit to Abraham, during the latter's recuperation from his circumcision.

While playing host to God, Abraham noticed three strangers, apparently Arabs weary from long and dreary travels, desperately looking for food and shelter. Abraham left God and went out to provide hospitality to these three. At first glance, it would appear to be a horrendous perversion of priorities: men over God! But, Abraham understood that God, being so great, is never in need of people; mortals in need of help should be taken care of if God is to be served.

‘Whosoever saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire world’ is the message of the Talmud. This is based on the premise that the world started with “one life”. Every human killed is a potential Adam, by himself. Kill a person and you destroy an “entire world”.

“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by injustice; who uses his neighbor's service without wages, and does not give him his wages.” (Jeremiah 22)

“And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.” (Ezra 6)

The Lord inspires the aspirant to serve Him (by believing in His Existence). None else can do it. Such a one is His devotee, who is pleasing to Him. God blesses him with His love. God is the great giver, ever so very wise. There is no other like Him. He is the all-powerful Lord and Master; nobody knows how to worship Him. His Mansion is imperceptible. For ordinary mortals, it is so difficult to accept His will. Says Nanak: I have collapsed at Your door, Lord. I am foolish and ignorant — please save me.” [SGGS 1185]

“The wandering beggars, warriors, celibates and hermit, through the perfect Guru, consider this: without selfless service, no one ever receives the rewards.” [SGGS 992]

“That selfless servant, who lives in the Guru’s household, is to obey the Guru’s commands. He is not to call attention to himself in any way. He is to meditate constantly within his heart on the Name of the Lord. One who sells his mind to the True Guru — that humble servant’s affairs are resolved. One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master. He Himself grants His grace; Says Nanak: That selfless servant practices the Guru’s teachings and preaching.” [SGGS 286]

“This body is softened with the Guru's word: One shall find peace, in selfless-service. The entire world continues to be affected by the force of reincarnation. Perform selfless-service, and you shall be given a place of honor in the court of the Lord. Declares Nanak: Now, swing your arms in joy!” [SGGS 25]

Sharing is a basic tenet of Sikh faith. Cooking and serving holy food to the congregation, washing utensils and dusting the shoes of the devotees, is one kind of service; and there is also the service of patients, disabled and aged.

“O you sons of men, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love vanity, and seek after falsehood?” (Selah. Psalms 4)

“To him who is afflicted love is due from his friend; or else he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” (Job 6)

“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for your love is better than wine.” (Song of Songs 1)

“My beloved speaks and says to me, Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away.” (Song of Songs 2)

“You are all beautiful, my love; there is no blemish in you.” (Song of Songs 4)

“How beautiful and how lovely are you, O love, for delights!” (Song of Songs 7)

“For all this I laid to my heart, and sought to clarify all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their deeds, are in the hand of God; no man knows whether it is love or hatred; all is before them.” (Ecclesiastes 9)

“And I said, ‘I pray you, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and grace with those who love Him and observe His commandments.’” (Nehemiah 1)

“And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked, and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore wrath has come upon you from the Lord.’” (Chr. II: 19)

“There are men who pretend friendship; and there is a true friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Pro 18)

The power of love has the potential of significantly changing one's overall perspective, for the betterment of self, and others. This new outlook could achieve wonders in all spheres of human endeavor. All religious and spiritual deeds, sans Love, shall be rendered purposeless, in fact they shall be said to be exercises-in-futility. Love develops gradually, over a period of time, in everybody's life, as per varying circumstances, experiences and conducive-environment. Various instances of love can be cited, in the natural-realms. The blossoming of flowers, and the buzzing around of the bumblebee, are two examples. The peacock-dance is famous, at the sighting of rain clouds. The love-pangs emanating from the heart of the timid partridge, pining for the full moon, are all manifestations of the hidden love, that is sublime and pristine, elevated and selfless, true and sacred. Love is such a magnetic force, which attracts and influences everyone. Love is a state of mind. Its born inside the human heart, grows and develops, and on attaining maturity, assumes the form of affection, and the whole personality undergoes a metamorphic sea-change. The body and the mind, the heart and the soul, all, start reverberating with spiritually gifted strains of mellifluous music. An unparalleled and inexplicable feeling of exhilaration engulfs the person. Anyone, who has never had this experience, this boon, is really an unfortunate and condemned mortal. Loving humanity, is loving God.

“Nobody is to be considered an enemy, and one should not harbor animosity towards anyone. God, who expanded His expanse, is within all; this is the teaching imparted by the True Guru. Be a friend to all; when the sense of separation is removed from the mind, then unity with the Lord becomes easy, for the stubbornness is gone, ambrosial nectar rains down, and the word of the Guru’s holy hymns seems sweet. He is pervading everywhere, in the water, on the land and in the sky; Nanak beholds the all-pervading Lord.” [SGGS 671]

Judaism PERFECTION & DISCIPLINE

“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.” (Psalms 50)

“I have seen a limit to all perfection; but your commandment is exceedingly broad.” (Psalms 119)

“He puts an end to darkness, and searches out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.” (Job 28)

“All who pass by clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?’” (Lam. 2)

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge; but he who hates reproof is stupid.” (Pro. 12)

“Then He opens the ears of men, and with discipline seals their instruction.” (Job 33)

“He opens their ear to discipline, and commands them to return from iniquity.” (Job 36)

“Do not delay in practicing righteousness; delay in committing sins. Implant the Name of the Lord, within oneself, and abandon greed. In the Sanctuary of the Saints, the sinful residues of past mistakes are erased. Meditating on the Lord, one shall become steady and stable. Nanak meditates on the Lord, for nothing and none else is permanent/stable, everything being variable, fluctuating, oscillating and temporary.” [SGGS 1354]

There is none who could lay claim to achieving perfection, for God is the only perfect One. Beholding his ambrosial glance, one becomes saintly. Endless are his virtuous qualities, and his worth cannot be appraised. One who pleases him is united with Him. The tongue is one, but His praises are countless. The True Lord of perfection cannot be assessed, is incomprehensible, balanced in the state of Nirvaana. He is not sustained by food; He has no hatred or vengeance; He is the giver of peace. Countless devotees continually bow in reverence to Him. In their hearts, they meditate on His lotus feet. One must always strive to enshrine His pure thoughts in one's mind, to attain a blessed life. Only God, does not contract or expand, He does not become small or big, and, hence, is complete, total and the only perfect One. Anything incomplete becomes an eyesore, whether it's a statue, machinery, or furniture, because in that state it is of no consequence, and of no avail, for it cannot be put to any usage. An incomplete work of music, dance, prose or poetry is futile, as it cannot be enjoyed by anybody.

The entire universe is functioning in consonance with the laws and discipline, enshrined in the unwritten constitution of the nature, authored by God. Bricks must be laid out, in a certain mode or array, in order that a straight wall be raised. And, all mechanisms must function in accordance with a planned structure or design, involving operations and optimum utilization and desired results.

Judaism FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION & SHARING

“But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared.” (Psalms 130)

“To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him.” (Daniel 9)

”Remember, O Lord, Your compassion and Your loving kindness; for they have been from of old.” (Psalms 25)

“The grace of the Lord has not ceased, and His compassion does not fail.” (Lam. 3)

“And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, from morning till night because He had compassion on His people, and on his dwelling place.” (Chr. II: 36)

“And Saul said, ‘Blessed be you of the Lord; for You have compassion on me.’” (Samuel I:’23)

“And forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions where they have transgressed against You, and give them compassion before those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them.” (Kings I:8)

“And it shall come to pass, after I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them back, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.” (Jeremiah 12)

“No eye pitied you, to do any of these to you, to have compassion upon you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were loathed, on the day that you were born.” (Ezekiel 16)

Sikhism* **FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION & SHARING*

“My Lord forgives innumerable sins, in seconds.” [SGGS 260]

“To practice forgiveness is the true form of fasting, good conduct and contentment. Disease does not afflict one, nor does the pain of death. One is liberated, and absorbed into God, who has no form or feature.” [SGGS 223]

“Without patience and forgiveness, countless hundreds of thousands have perished. Their numbers cannot be counted; none could count them. By the blessing of the Lord’s word, enter the mansion of the Lord’s presence; one shall be blessed with patience, forgiveness, truth and peace. And one shall be unfettered. Partake of the true wealth of meditation, and the Lord Himself shall abide within one’s body. Through egotism, one is distracted and ruined; other than the Lord, all things are corrupt. Forming His creatures, He placed Himself within them; the Creator is unattached and infinite.” [SGGS 937]

“Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot and truth the twist. If this is the sacred thread that the priest has to offer, for the soul, then one must wear it. It does not break, it cannot be soiled by filth, and it cannot be burnt, or lost. Blessed are those mortal beings, says Nanak, who wear such a thread around their necks. One buys the ordinary thread for a few shells, and seated in an enclosure, one wears it. Whispering instructions into others’ ears, the priest becomes a guru. But the recipient dies, and the sacred thread falls away, and the soul departs without it.” [SGGS 471]

“One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has, says Nanak, he knows the path.” [SGGS 1245]

Compassion and contentment are intertwined-entities. Both lend discipline to life.

Judaism

HUMILITY

“When men have humbled you, you shall say, ‘There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.’” (Job 22)

“And Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and said to him, ‘Thus said the Lord God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve Me.’” (Exodus 10)

“The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom; and humility is before honor.” (Proverbs 15:33)

“And the man Moses was very humble, more than any other men which were upon the face of the earth.” (Numbers 12)

“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor goes humility.” (Proverbs 18:12)

“The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life.” (Proverbs 22:4)

“Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that he might humble you, and that he might test you, to do you good in the end.” (Deut 8)

“Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, who have performed his judgment; seek righteousness, seek humility; it may be that you shall be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger.” (Tzeephania 2:3)

“And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not.” (Deut 8)

“One must become as humble as grass, if one longs to enter the Court of the Lord, as grass is cut, trampled over and remains under others’ feet.” [SGGS 1378]

“The simmal tree is straight as an arrow; it is very tall, and very thick. But those birds, which visit it hopefully, depart disappointed. Its fruits are tasteless, its flowers are nauseating, and its leaves are useless. Sweetness and humility, says Nanak, are the essence of virtue and goodness. When something is placed on the balancing scale and weighed, the side that descends is heavier. The sinner, like the deer hunter, bows down twice as much. But what can be achieved by bowing the head, when the heart is impure?” [SGGS 470]

“Among all persons, the supreme person is the one who gives up his egotistical pride in the company of the holy. One who sees himself as lowly, shall be accounted as the highest of all. One whose mind is the dust of all, recognizes the Name of the Lord in each and every heart. One who eradicates cruelty from within his own mind, looks upon the entire world as his friend. One who looks upon pleasure and pain as one and the same, affirms Nanak, is not affected by sin or virtue.” [SGGS 266]

If one becomes the slave of the Lord’s slaves, then he finds the Lord and eradicates ego from within. The Lord of bliss is his object of devotion; night and day, he sings the glorious praises of the Lord. Humility must not be misconstrued to imply timidity and weakness. It is, on the contrary, a powerful characteristic, that speaks volumes about the humble one's personality. The humble person is bestowed fame and fortune, even without asking (praying) for it. On the other hand, someone who seeks recognition, on account of one's wealth, status or knowledge, is not a humble person. Occasionally, one needs to remind oneself of the destructibility of the human-body (by looking downwards, towards the earth, and at the dust and ashes, unto which this body shall merge).

“And He said, ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very perverse generation, children in whom there is no faith.’” (Deut. 32 Tanakh-Torah; 20)

“And they did not ask an accounting from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to the workmen; for they dealt in good faith.” (Kings II: 12:16)

“But there was no account made with them of the money that was delivered to their hand, because they dealt in good faith.” (Kings II:22: 7)

“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.” (Chabakuk 2:4)

“I kept faith, even when I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’” (Psalms 10)

“One who has faith in the Guru comes to dwell upon God. He is acclaimed as a devotee, a humble devotee throughout the three worlds. The Lord resides in his heart. True are his actions; true are his ways. True is his heart; Truth is what he utters. True is his vision; true is his form. He distributes Truth and he spreads Truth. One who recognizes the supreme Lord as the True One, that humble being immerses himself, in meditation, and merges his identity with the sole entity.” [SGGS 283]

And, this trust prods one onto realization of the self, and one's roots, which ultimately results in God-realization.

“One must try, always, to remain in a state of equilibrium and stability, and never to let dilemma invade the mind. That's possible only when one tends to have an abiding faith in the Guru's sayings (word/command/advice). On that foundation is the marvelous palace, having bejeweled walls, raised. Such a devotee is entitled to be the recipient of lavish eulogies and encomiums, all over, on the surface of earth, and has a rare and unique glow and radiance, on his face.” [SGGS 678]

Just as faith in water leads one to the ultimate hope of thirst being quenched on drinking it. And, as faith in sun reassures the needy that its warmth shall prove to be comforting on a cold, chilly-night in the winter, faith in the supreme-reality leads one to the fulfillment of all worldly desires. And, finally, this faith and trust assist the bearer, to be ferried across the Ocean-of-Fire (life), in a befitting and honorable fashion. This would be salvation, for an aspiring soul.

“Why have we fasted, say they, and you see not? Why have we afflicted our soul, and you take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business, and exact all your payments.” (Isaiah 58)

“And the men answered her, ‘Our life for yours, if you do not utter our business. And it shall be, when the Lord has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you’” (Joshua 2)

“If you restrain your foot because of the sabbath, from pursuing your business on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable; and shall honor it, not doing your own ways, nor pursuing your own business, nor speaking of vain matters.” (Isaiah 58)

“Make all deals, O traders, and take good care of the merchandise. Buy that object which will go along, to the next world. In the next world, the All-knowing Merchant will take this object and shall reward the earthly trader. Take the merchandise of the Lord’s praises along. The Lord shall see this and approve. Those who do not have the assets of Truth—how can they find peace? Like the deer caught in the trap, they suffer in terrible agony; they continually cry out in pain. The counterfeit coins are not put into the treasury; they do not obtain the blessed vision of the Lord-Guru. Practicing falsehood again and again, people come and go in reincarnation, and forfeit their honor. Advises Nanak: Those who chant the Name of the Lord earn great profits.” [SGGS 22]

“Praise the formless Lord in the mind. O my mind, make this the true occupation. Let the tongue become pure, to taste the ambrosial nectar. And then the soul shall be, forever, peaceful. The company of the holy is the all-important one. Hence, perform the tasks assigned by the Lord, and listen to the Lord’s sermon. In the Lord’s court, such a face shall be radiant, so promises Nanak.” [SGGS 81]

“With greed within them, their minds are filthy, and they spread filth around. They indulge in filthy deeds, and suffer in pain. They deal in falsehood, and nothing but falsehood; telling lies, they suffer in pain. Rare is that person who enshrines the immaculate Guru’s word within his mind. By Guru’s grace, his skepticism is removed. He walks in harmony with the Guru’s will, day and night; remembering the Name of the Lord, he attains peace.” [SGGS 1062]

An ideal business is in which society benefits from its profits. Such a businessperson is God's chosen one. His service to humanity and his humanism shall be the cause of receiving rewards, forever, financially, and spiritually.

Section 3

THE OPPOSING FORCES

“And the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people; for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.” (Samuel II: 19)

“He arose, and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand cleaved to the sword; and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder the killed.” (Samuel II: 23)

“But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines; and the Lord wrought a great victory.” (Samuel II: 23)

“O sing to the Lord a new song; for He has done marvelous things; His right hand, and His holy arm, have gained Him the victory.” (Psalms 98)

“For by wise counsel you shall make your war; and in a multitude of counsellors there is victory.” (Proverbs 24)

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all.” (Chr. I: 29)

“Come now therefore, I pray you, curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me; perhaps I shall prevail, that we may defeat them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.” (Num 22)

“When, by His grace, the True Guru is met, the lamp is lit within the temple of the mind and it realizes what victory/defeat really are, then he comes to appreciate the true value of his own home.” [SGGS 235]

“Time and time again, dwell upon the Lord. Dwelling upon the Lord, defeat shall not come to you. I am a sacrifice, a sacrifice to those, who sing the praises of the Saints, the sons of the Lord. Meeting the Lord, total Truth is obtained.” [SGGS 342]

“He has no pain — he is totally at peace. With his eyes, he sees only the One Lord. No one seems evil to him — all are good. There is no defeat — he is totally victorious.” [SGGS 1302]

“The noose of death is cut; one’s wanderings cease; victory is obtained, when one conquers his own mind; eternal stability is obtained from the Guru, and one’s day-to-day wanderings cease.” [SGGS 258]

“That which is for his good, he thinks evil. If someone tells him the truth, he looks upon that as poison. He cannot tell victory from defeat. This is the way of the faithless cynic.” [SGGS 180]

“Celebrate the victory of the Lord; taking to His sanctuary, the supreme status is obtained. I am a sacrifice to the feet of the True Guru. The Guru is the boat; through the Shabad of His word, the terrifying world-ocean is crossed over.” [SGGS 414]

“Holding them by the hand, He has lifted them up out of the deep, dark pit, and their victory is celebrated throughout the world. He elevates and exalts the lowly, and fills the empty. They receive the supreme, sublime essence of the ambrosia of the Name.” [SGGS 804]

“For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to be annihilated. But if we had been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept my silence, since the affliction would not have equalled the kings’ damage.” (Esther 7)

“And now you intend to keep the people of Judah and Jerusalem as male and female slaves to you. Do you not have sins of your own against the Lord your God?” (Chr. II: 28)

God is both, a Mother and a Father. It is fascinating to note that the Hebrew name for the Lord, ‘Adonay’ has a feminine ending; and the Hebrew name for God, ‘Elohim’ has a masculine ending. A merciful God is more in consonance with feminine or motherly instincts; a strict God is more in tune with attributes of a father-figure. The Jewish concept of a Lord/God is a combination of female and male attributes. The Almighty is a ‘He’ and a ‘She’, thereby harmonizing the best of both genders, so that humans can feel blessed with both, a Mother and a Father, in heaven, as on earth; the mortal parents would act as His/Her ‘authorized~representatives’, to bear and rear children, to take care of them; the Heavenly parents would assume charge of the offspring, eternally.

There’s a Jewish proverb: “Without woman, man is only half a man, incomplete”. Eve was meant to be man’s best friend, to take away from Adam the curse of his loneliness. More than this, she would fulfill her Biblically designated destiny of being ‘Ezer K’negdo’, which, in English, translates into a ‘helpmate’ for man (Genesis 2:20). But rabbinic commentators say the Hebrew meaning is “opposite” and not “helpmate”.

Woman is meant to balance out the deficiencies in man’s nature with her dissimilar attributes. She was to be different than man. Man and woman are to be complementary.

Woman and man are complements, as well as supplements to each other. The mutual attraction between the two magnetic fields is natural, because man has certain female hormones/genes in him, and vice-versa.

“The female is in the male, and the male is in the female. Understand this, O God-realized being! The focus of attention is on the celestial music of God’s Noumenon, resulting in the realization of Almighty’s power.” [SGGS 879]

The insatiable appetite for power and authority has led man to assume the leadership-roles in a variety of spheres of endeavor, namely politics, religion, business, warfare, and the larger society, in general. Some thinkers and philosophers, naturally men, had the courage to classify women as "Insignificant, irrelevant ones". Women were castigated, oppressed, subjugated, tortured, exploited in all manners, possible, and were relegated to the background, in all matters.

Guru Nanak was the first religious preacher who raised his voice against the tyranny and indignation suffered by women, over the ages.

“Woman bears a male child; within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. So why call her low? She gives birth to kings. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all. Only the True Lord is excluded from the womb’s cycle of birth and death.” [SGGS 473]

The woman’s contribution to society cannot and must not be ignored. Her role has to be recognized by the males. The human frame is a temple, constructed by God, Himself, and the home is a temple of understanding, created jointly, by woman and man. Only when mutual love and care are shared with humility and grace, witnessing God in each other, shall their home and family be blessed, where peace, harmony, serenity and tranquility shall prevail.

“The fire consumed their young men; and their virgins had no marriage songs.” (Psalms 78)

“And Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance, and he allied himself by marriage with Ahab.” (Chr II: 18)

:And Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought her to the city of David, until he finished building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the surrounding wall of Jerusalem.” (Kings I: 3)

“If he takes for himself another wife; her food, her garment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.” (Exodus 21)

“And I saw, when I had put faithless Israel away for having committed adultery, and had given her a bill of divorce; that her false sister Judah was not afraid, but went and played the harlot also.” (Jeremiah 3)

As per Sikh customs/traditions as governed by the religious-spiritual Diktat of the Gurus, woman and man undertake to tie the nuptial-knot according to the prescribed code-of-conduct. They must reciprocate love and understanding, while taking due care to recognize each other's uniqueness, thereby ensuring equality (as equals, and as life-partners). This shall eliminate any occurrence of conflict on the basis of a perceived threat to either's identity. Harmony shall prevail, and all crisis situations shall be dealt with, in a spirit of compromise and commitment, keeping divorce at bay. The ascending divorce-rate in the Western society and culture, is attributable to the fact that the institution of marriage is considered to be no more than a legal contract, that can be nullified, with the stroke of the pens of the two parties and a Judge. Both must strive to achieve a state of camaraderie on all planes: emotional, physical, financial, intellectual, and spiritual. Celibacy has been repudiated in the strongest terms, for it is well nigh impossible to banish the thought of sexual-union.

To have religious sanction, the ceremony is to be solemnized in the presence of the holy congregation, where the bride and the groom are required to circumbulate the Scripture four times, as the priest reads the appropriate hymn.

“In the first round, the Lord sets forth instructions for performing duties of married life. Embrace the conduct of righteousness, renouncing sin. Enshrine the contemplative remembrance of God, in your hearts. Second round, the Lord leads both to meet the True Guru, the primal being. The fear of the fearless Lord in the mind eradicates the filth of egotism. The bride prepares to start a new life, in a new home, on leaving her parental abode. Third round, the mind is filled with Divine love. In the fourth and final round, the emphasis is on unison, between the spouses, as also communion between God and human-soul. She has attained her Lord and Master, the cherished fruit of her mind's desires.” [SGGS 773]

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.” (Deut. 30)

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2)

“In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” (Genesis 7)

“And Sarah was a hundred and twenty seven years old; these were the years of the life of Sarah.” (Genesis 23)

“And if any further harm follows, then you shall give life for life.” (Exodus 21)

“And when I saw that you did not save me, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the Ammonites, and the Lord delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day, to fight against me?” (Judges 12)

“You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalms 16)

“And he said, ‘Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.’” (Gen. 27)

“Now therefore forgive, I beg you, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God that He may take away from me this death only.” (Exodus 10)

“Only this is the chance, a golden one at that. Just ponder, and analyze, hypothetically, this very moment, for later you might lose this opportunity, and then, nothing more than a sordid feeling of remorse and repentance shall remain, in the heart.” [SGGS 1159]

“All that is seen must die. Only God and his devotees are spiritually immortal.” [SGGS 1100]

(This 'chance' pertains to the optimum and best utilization of this lifetime, for meditation, and for doing good unto others. One's own welfare would be a natural consequence, and a foregone conclusion).

First conquer the fear of death, learn to accept/embrace death; only then would you become worthy of living a pristinely sublime and selfless life. Humility and faith in God would result in fortitude.

“First, accept death, and give up any hope of life. Becoming the dust of the feet of all, and then, one may come to God. Accept that only one who has died, truly lives, and one who is alive, consider him dead. Those who are in love with the One Lord, are the blessed ones. Pain does not even approach that person, within whose mind God resides. Hunger and thirst do not affect him, and the messenger of death does not terrorize him.” [SGGS 1102]

Whomsoever discovered this treasure-chest of Noumenon, his treasury shall overflow with piety, humility, prosperity and service.

Practicing what they preached, the Gurus and their worthy disciples demonstrated that human life is worthless if not lived with honor and dignity. The Fifth and the Ninth Gurus, along with all four sons of the 10th Guru, and innumerable brave ones sacrificed their lives, at the altar of religious fanaticism, in order to uphold and preserve the liberty to practice a faith of one's choice.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1)

”And of Joseph he said, ‘Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath.’” (Deut 33)

“It is a sign between me and the people of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31)

“And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted, nor did courage remain in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth below.” (Joshua 2)

“For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.” (Judges 13)

“They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.” (Isaiah 13)

“They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; nor shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be food for the birds of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.” (Jeremiah 16)

The existence of ‘heaven’ and/or ‘hell’, per se, has been denied by the Sikh Gurus. They reject outright the school of thought that these are some ‘designated areas’ where a soul is dispatched, as per commendable deeds, or misdeeds.

“Human ego ensnares one, thereby creating for the person ‘heaven or hell’. Hankering after worldly pursuits, one creates hell for oneself.” [SGGS 761]

“Wherever the saints reside, such a place reverberates with the ambience of heaven. They enshrine the lotus feet of God within their hearts. Listen, O mind and body, and recognize the way to find peace, so that you may eat and enjoy the various delicacies of the Lord. Taste the ambrosial nectar of the Naam, the Name of the Lord, within the mind. Its taste is wondrous — it cannot be described. All greed shall die, and all thirst shall be quenched. The humble beings seek the sanctuary of the supreme Lord God. The Lord dispels the fears and attachments of countless incarnations. God has showered His mercy and grace upon slave Nanak.” [SGGS 1142]

“Creating the universe, God remains diffused throughout it. In the wind, water and fire, the Supreme is all pervasive. The waving mind seeks indulgence in evil passions and vices, forgetting its primal obligation towards the Creator. Forgetting God, one must be prepared to bear innumerable miseries. Consequently, such a misguided one suffers the ignominy of having to undergo 8.4 million reincarnations. This vicious cycle of death and rebirth has been termed as hell. Due to the present life misdeeds, one may be reborn as a four-legged animal, as a crawling serpent, as a flying bird, as a small insect or as a creature in water. In such dire straits, none from one's kith and kin shall be the savior; it is only within God power to rescue and redeem. Discard falsehood and attain the truth, and thus become the recipient of the rewards you desire. This, then, is the ideal and profitable bartering practice.” [SGGS 1028]

“And they said one to another, ‘We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.’” (Genesis 42)

“This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of you.” (Deut. 2)

“Therefore are my loins filled with anguish; pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman in labor; I was bowed down so that I could not hear; I was dismayed so that I could not see.” (Isaiah 21)

“At their presence the people are in anguish; all faces are covered with blackness.” (Yoel 2)

“When your fear comes like a storm, and your calamity comes like a stormy wind; when distress and anguish comes upon you.” (Pro 1)

“Anguish comes and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.” (Ezekiel 7)

“For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor, and the anguish as of her who brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, sobbing and spreading out her hands, saying, ‘Woe is me now! For my soul faints before the killers.’” (Jeremiah 4)

“My heart inside me is in anguish; and the terrors of death have fallen upon me.” (Psalms 55)

“Burning and burning, writhing in pain, one wrings one’s hands and goes insane. The Lord seems to be angry. The fault lies with the devotee, and not with the Lord. The devotee does not know His excellence and worth. Having wasted one’s youth, now one comes to regret and repent.” [SGGS 794]

“When the people of the world are suffering in pain, they call upon the Lord in loving prayer. The True Lord naturally listens and hears and gives comfort. He commands the God of rain, and the rain pours down in torrents. Corn and wealth are produced in great abundance and prosperity; their value cannot be estimated. Sayeth Nanak: Praise the Name of the Lord; He reaches out and sustains all beings. The mortal, never again, suffers in pain.” [SGGS 1281]

In scientific-parlance, the 'rotations and revolutions' pertaining to the earth and the sun, bring about the change of seasons. It is a routine that is pre-programmed (in computer-jargon) in the characteristics of 'nature'. During scorching summers, the flow of rivers gets bogged down, while the same rivers become inundated during rainy season. They dry out in summers, and submerge the entire region when they flood. Vegetation cries out and birds and animals wail for a dewdrop and a raindrop, to quench their thirst. On hearing the pleas of the tormented souls, rains pour down, and flowers blossom, once again, and earth is rejuvenated.

Similarly, 'heat' is generated on the plane of the mind and soul, when desire, lust, anger, greed, attachment and other vices take their toll by vibrations and reverberations, attacking the human psyche. All the 'positives' have a cooling effect on the human mind and body. Compassion and contentment, forgiveness and morality, along with other qualities of the head and the heart, forge a powerful alliance to counter the armies of aggressive elements (vices). Soothing signals emanate from such calm souls, and both the sender and the receiver experience 'bliss'.

“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be in the neck of your enemies; your father’s children shall bow down in your presence.” (Genesis 49)

“And to set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken.” (Deut. 26)

“I am the Lord; that is My Name; and My Glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to carved idols.” (Isaiah 42)

“Draw me after you, we will run; the king has brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you, we will praise your love more than wine; rightly they love you.” (Song of Songs 1)

Renounce both praise and criticism; seek, instead, the state of Nirvaana (salvation). Says Nanak: This is such a difficult game; only those with faith in God understand it! [SGGS 219]

“We have been burnt by the fires of the world. Some speak well of us, and some speak ill of us, but we have surrendered our body to God. Whoever comes to His sanctuary, is saved by His merciful grace. Humble Nanak has entered His sanctuary, Dear Lord, and pleads for the protection of his honor!” [SGGS 528]

“Even if one could live throughout the four ages, or even ten times more, and even if one were known throughout all the continents, and followed by all, with a good name and reputation, with praise and fame throughout the world—still, if the Lord does not bless one with His glance of grace, then who cares? What is the use? Among worms, one would be considered a lowly worm, and even contemptible sinners would hold one in contempt.” [SGGS 2]

“It is not good to slander anyone, but the foolish, self-willed still do it. The faces of the slanderers are blackened, and they fall into the most horrible hell.” [SGGS 755]

Praise is an intoxicant, but self-aggrandizement is a vice. When another praises one, the former is, naturally, on cloud nine. Ironically, one does not like some one else being praised. This is the characteristic of a jealous mind. Criticism hurts, and it hurts all the more when someone, having the ulterior motive of defaming another, criticizes a noble and praise worthy person. On the contrary, a sycophant (again, someone with a vested interest) would leave no stone unturned, to heap accolades and eulogies on an undeserving person.

“And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother for glory and for beauty.” (Exodus 28)

“And for Aaron’s sons you shall make coats, and you shall make for them girdles, and turbans shall you make for them, for glory and for beauty.” (Exodus 28)

“The beauty, O Israel, is slain upon your high places; how are the mighty fallen!” (Samuel II: 1)

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.” (Isaiah 13)

“And your fame went forth among the nations for your beauty; for it was perfect through my splendor, which I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 16)

“Behold, therefore I will bring foreigners upon you, the most terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom, and they shall defile your brightness.” (Ezekiel 28)

“The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it; the cypress trees were not like its boughs, and the plane trees were not like its branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like it in its beauty.” (Ezekiel 31)

“For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.” (Zecharia 9)

“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears the Lord shall be praised.” (Proverbs 31)

“They alone are beautiful and attractive, who abide in the company of the holy. Those who have accumulated the wealth of the Lord’s Name—they alone are wise investors, and are praised by all and sundry.” [SGGS 132]

“Power is fraudulent, beauty is fraudulent, and wealth is fraudulent, as is pride of ancestry. Beholding the bitter melon, he is deceived, by appearance. But it is not worth even a shell; the illusionary riches will not go along with anyone.” [SGGS 708]

"Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder" is a realistically pertinent statement. And, equally true is the fact that beauty, besides being external and physical, is, also, internal, intellectual and spiritual. To admire the latter, the observer must be endowed with the 'third eye' having the potential of penetrating through bone and flesh, to have the heavenly-view of the inner-beauty of someone's heart and soul. A living personification of this statement is the crane, exquisitely adorable, but so deceitful, inside. But, the ugly looking nightingale, which has been blessed with the most mellifluous voice, churns out soothing music (even while it may be the regular language of the species). Some beautiful people are treacherous and wicked and cunning, while the so-described ugly ones are pious, learned and compassionate.

A child is showered with love and affection by all and sundry, owing to its qualities of beauty and innocence. It is free of the vices of greed, lust, malice, anger and ego. It is more carefree than the birds that fly in gay abandon. The child-like traits are visible in God's chosen few who continue to retain the charm and innocence, in word and spirit, until their last day. This Godly-attribute cannot be replenished and substituted by donning expensive ornaments and using cosmetics to look beautiful. Saints, seers, saviors and prophets, have a radiant gleam and glow on their faces, and a magnetic field and halo, around them, that would, instantaneously captivate anyone in range.

“And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.” (Genesis 1)

“And Aaron did so; he lighted its lamps to give light in front of the lampstand, as the Lord commanded Moses.” (Num. 8)

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may be felt.’” (Exodus 10)

“Command the people of Israel, that they bring to you pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually.” (Levi 24)

“And you came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.” (Deut 4)

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5)

“Then David arose, and all the people who were with him, and they passed over the Jordan; by the morning light not one of them had failed to pass over the Jordan.” (Samuel II: 17)

“I have heard of you, that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.” (Daniel 5)

“The Guru has provided the healing ointment of spiritual wisdom, and dispelled the darkness of ignorance. By the Lord’s grace, one meets the saint. Sayeth Nanak: My mind has been enlightened.” [SGGS 293]

“If a hundred moons were to rise, and a thousand suns appeared, even with such light, there would still be terrifying darkness (in the mind), without the Guru's guidance. Says Nanak: Those who do not think of the Guru, and who think of themselves as clever, shall be left abandoned in the field, like the scattered sesame.” [SGGS 463]

Darkness can be found all over, in great measure within man's mind, and without. The earth's crust is dark towards the interior. The deeper levels of the oceans are dark, the sun's light being unable to permeate beyond a specified range (fathoms). Due to the increased effect of the vices of lust, greed, egocentricism, hatred, jealousy, violence and addictions, even more darkness can be found within the hearts, minds and souls of modern man.

The germs of disease originate in dark regions. Snakes and scorpions are often found in dark areas. Dacoits and marauders wait for their prey in dark and nether confines. So do the lowly vices wait for the opportune moment to launch a vicious attack targeted towards persons with a weak power of resilience. 'Darkness' is a synonym for 'sorrow', 'grief' and 'penury'. Ostentatious illuminations and fireworks are on display during festivities and rejoicing. Due to the darkness of ignorance, coupled with a lack of will and interest, to search and pray for the true light, today's man is lost and frightened. Finding oneself in deep peril, there seems to be no happiness, notwithstanding the rapid strides towards the destinations of acquiring material wealth and accruing knowledge.

“And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and the two made a covenant together.”(Kings I: 5)

The Talmud has a great example to illustrate the idea of ‘pious foolishness’. It asks: “Would you like to know who is a pious fool?” It is a man standing by the seashore, wrapped in his ‘tallit’, devoutly engrossed in prayer. A ‘tallit’ is the prayer shawl with fringes on its four corners, used by the Jews, as ordained by the Bible (Numbers 15:37-41). Suddenly, he hears screams from a drowning person, crying and pleading for being saved. Knowing well that he could save the person, he continues to stand his ground, for how could he think of forsaking God, with whom he is in conversation, just to render help to a mere mortal in distress? The rabbis call such a person a ‘pious fool’, the religious and politest way of calling him an ‘undeniable idiot’.

And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, “O Lord, I beg you, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” (Samuel II: 15)

“And you shall speak to all who are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him, that he may minister to me in the priest’s office.” (Exodus 28)

“Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, who, when they shall hear all these statutes, shall say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’” (Deut. 4)

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the people of Israel listened to him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.” (Deut. 34)

“A person performing a misdeed, fully well aware and conscious of the repercussions, thereof, and realizing the fallout, is deemed to be the greatest fool. Instead of feeling guilt or remorse, he becomes arrogant and egocentric, and takes pride in his actions. He is like the one who falls into a well, despite carrying a glowing lamp, with him.” [SGGS 1376]

God gave humans the unique gift of the power of analysis, and by the optimum utilization of the nervous system (the brain), one could achieve wonders. But, rarely, does that happen. A child's thinking faculties are not fully developed, hence cannot be called a fool. But, such an adult is a fool, who does not think and act rationally. A person lacking in wisdom, does not act in consonance with certain universally acclaimed and socially acceptable norms.

A literate or educated person may not, necessarily, be a wise one, too. But, God may gift an illiterate person with the blessing of wisdom. And while there's no guarantee that an educated person would realize God, there have been great devotees who never learnt the Three "Rs" in school, but mastered the highest techniques of Communion with God. Another myth and ill conceived notion pertains to the prevalent practice of linking intelligence and wisdom with wealth and prestige. A person who is successful in a given vocation/profession might not, necessarily, be considered wise in other spheres, too. Generally, there is a tendency to become dependant upon such people in various matters, including spiritual-religious and socio-economic, even though the concerned person might not be, remotely, having an affinity with the said issues.

“To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply the pain of your child bearing; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you.’” (Genesis 3)

“And behold joy and gladness, slaying bulls, and killing sheep, eating meat, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.”(Isaiah 22)

“The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.” (Exodus 15)

“The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor.” (Esther 8)

“I also will do this to you; I will appoint over you terror, consumption, and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart; and you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.” (Levi. 26)

“Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil; but the counsellors of peace have joy.” (Proverbs 12)

“And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest; but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.” (Deut 28)

“Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for trouble of spirit.” (Isaiah 65)

“Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be like a watered garden; and they shall not languish in sorrow any more.” (Jeremiah 31)

“One who understands the essence of a ‘life-Divine’, such a humble one (ever in God’s servitude) is very rare. He has, not even, an iota of pain, and is, totally, at peace. There is no defeat — he is totally victorious. He is never in sorrow — he is happy, always. Says Nanak: The humble servant of the Lord is himself the Lord (becomes identical; resembles godly-attributes); he does not come and go in the vicious cycle of reincarnation.” [SGGS 1302]

Sorrow and pain is like an epidemic, the only cure for it being the regular administering of dosages of Noumenon of God. None has escaped the octopus-like tentacles of sorrow. Since the desires are innumerable, the causes of sorrow are countless, too. When desires are not fulfilled, pain is born, therefrom.

“In hope, there is very great pain; the self-willed focuses his consciousness on it. The God-loving become desire less, and attain supreme peace. In the midst of their household, they remain detached; Sorrow and separation do not cling to them at all. They are pleased with the Lord’s will. Says Nanak: They remain forever immersed in the primal Lord, who blends them with Himself.” [SGGS 1249]

It is human nature to be jealous of another's happiness, and to cry hoarsely at one's sorrow. But, in reality, none is actually happy, in this world. The nodal point and focus of all happiness (the reservoir of joy and bliss) is God and meditation on His Name. Every laugh is attached with the apprehension of a wail looming large. And behind the curtain of all praise and accolades, lurks the dangerous snake of exposure, insult and defamation. Profits are, naturally, made at great stakes and risks. Hence, all efforts should be made to decorate this life with all worthy attributes and ornamentation, so as to be received by God, in His magnificent kingdom, with honor and praise. At that moment, disgrace and rebuke can be avoided, if one had the wisdom, of doing so, during the time that was available, for meditation.

“Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to those who shall inherit them; for every one from the least even to the greatest is given to greed, from the prophet even to the priest every one deals falsely.” (Jeremiah 8)

“O you who dwell upon many waters, abundant in treasures, your end has come, and the measure of your greed.” (Jeremiah 51)

“Because his greed knew no rest, he shall not save anything of that which he desired.” (Job 20)

“What good is food, and what good are attires & adornments, if the True Lord does not abide within the mind? What good are fruits, what good is butter, what good is sweet molasses, and what good is flour? What good are clothes, and what good is a soft bed, to enjoy pleasures and sensual delights? What good is an army, and what good are soldiers, servants and mansions to live in? Says Nanak: Without the True Name, all this paraphernalia is perishable.” [SGGS 142]

“Nanak wonders: What has happened to the world? There is no guide or friend. There is no love, even among brothers and relatives. For the sake of worldly riches, people have lost their faith. They weep and wail. They slap their faces and pull their hair out. But if they chant the Name of the Lord, they shall be absorbed into it.” [SGGS 1410]

Greed is considered to be a major vice that leads one onto other dangerous vices like violence and deceit. It assumes the proportions of a mental disease, when it reaches the saturation point.

The natural equilibrium is disturbed when a greedy person accumulates immense wealth while another person has to shiver in the cold, without shelter, sans clothing.

To remain happy with whatsoever one has, is ‘true contentment’. This should not be misconstrued to imply that being ambitious is negative, provided the rapid strides towards success do not in any way impinge upon another's interests. Abundance of wealth and materials does not guarantee happiness. Peace is the direct consequence of contentment. Being progressive is welcome, without usurping another's rights and privileges.

And whoever lies carnally with a woman, who is a slave betrothed to a man, and not wholly redeemed, nor freedom given her; inquiry shall be. (Lev. 19)

And they made their lives bitter with hard slavery, in mortar, and in brick, and in all kinds of service in the field; all their service, which they made them serve, was with rigor. (Exodus 1)

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. (Deut 5)

For the Lord our God, He is who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way where we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. (Joshua 24)

That the Lord sent a prophet to the people of Israel, who said to them, “Thus said the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of slavery.” (Judges 6)

And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear, and from the hard slavery in which you were made to serve. (Isaiah 14)

For I brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. (Micha 6)

Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children as their children; and, behold, we force our sons and daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are already pressed into slavery; and it is not in our power to redeem them; for other men have our fields and vineyards. (Nechemia 5)

“Now, the Merciful Lord hath decreed that nobody shall persecute and torture another, and that all may reside in peace and harmony, under His Benevolent Rule.” [SGGS 74]

“Fareed implores the Lord, not to let him live on alms, and on another's mercy. Instead, he would prefer death, to slavery.” [SGGS 1380]

“The battle-drums and conch-shells signal the commencement of the battle. The spiritual warriors enter the battlefield, in all their paraphernalia and regalia. He alone is known as a spiritual hero, who fights in defense of religion (not the religions or faiths that we have founded, but the religion of the Lord: that wants us to sacrifice our lives for peace and justice, and to never let cowardice devour us). He may be cut apart, limb by limb, but he never withdraws from the war-zone.” [SGGS 1105]

The God-loving and the God-fearing warriors would never subjugate another, but would use their power to protect the weak and the downtrodden, the oppressed and the suppressed. Freedom is the birthright of every human, while slavery is a curse. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Sikh people have been relentlessly carrying on an agitation, demanding a separate homeland, as promised by the lawmakers of free India at the time of framing the Constitution of India, at the end of the imperialistic colonial rule of the British, who created Pakistan, on religious lines, as an Islamic State.

Most recently, since 1984 when the Indian regime launched a warlike operation to attack the holiest Sikh shrine, The Golden Temple, the Sikhs have been constantly persecuted, dubbed as extremists, killed in fake police and army encounters, and jailed without free-trial, for several years. The Sikhs have been waging a struggle for freedom, due to the Spirit of Freedom that was inculcated in them by all Gurus.

Section 4

CAUTION

“For the company of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery.” (Job 15)

“Neither from a stranger’s hand shall you offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption is in them, and blemishes are in them; they shall not be accepted for you.” (Lev. 22)

“Not his the corruption, but his children are blemished; they are a perverse and crooked generation.” (Deut. 32)

“And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Kemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites, did the king defile.” (Kings II: 23)

“The self-willed egoistic persons read and study, but they do not know the way. They do not understand the Name of the Lord; they wander, deluded and deluged by doubt. They take bribes, and give false testimony; the noose of evil-mindedness is around their necks, and they shall hang themselves. They read the Scriptures; they argue and debate, but do not know the essence of reality; they indulge in rituals and ceremonial practices. Without the perfect Guru, the essence of reality is not obtained. The true and pure beings walk the path of Truth. He Himself is wise, and He Himself judges the Truth. Those whom God blesses with His glance of grace become God-loving, and praise the word of the holy hymns.” [SGGS 1032]

Such actions and deeds are severely deplorable and tantamount to a grave sin. Feeding one's children from the money gotten through corrupt means, is just like poisoning their food with the venom of a snake. A person whose intake is such, shall have vitriolic speech and a foul tongue, never pleasant in conversation and in his dealings with others.

Such misdemeanors of the corrupt do not go unpunished. They shall be penalized, on earth, and in God's Supreme Court.

Judaism

CRUELTY

“Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruelty are their swords.” (Gen. 49)

“That the cruelty done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be upon Abimelech their brother.” (Judges 9)

“You have not strengthened the weak, nor have you healed the sick, nor have you bound up that which was broken, nor have you brought back that which was driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty you have ruled them.” (Ezekiel 34)

“Look upon the covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” (Psalms 74)

“One has not forsaken sexual desire, and not forgotten anger; greed has not departed, either. There’s no stop to slandering and gossiping about others. All service is useless and fruitless. By breaking into the houses of others and robbing them, one fills one’s belly, what a sinner. But, when this sinner goes to the world beyond, he shall be notorious, for all his acts of omission and commission, that he hath committed, due to ignorance. Cruelty has not left his mind; he has not cherished kindness for other living beings.” [SGGS 1253]

“When oppression and tyranny are on the ascendant, a myriad array of vices controls the human-frame (body and mind). The bondage of self-aggrandizement can be gotten rid of by meditating upon God's Name. That's the only remedy for the tormented oppressor as well as the weak and cowardly oppressed.” [SGGS 255]

“The emperor who struck down the poor, has been burnt in the fire by the supreme Lord God. The Creator administers true justice. He is the saving grace of His slaves.” [SGGS 199]

“It is tyranny to use force; the Lord shall call the cruel to account. And then they shall be tortured and humiliated, in the Lord’s court. Keep the slate of conscience clean and clear, to become the recipient of God’s grace. Only then, in the true court of the Lord, one shall not be captured or put in shackles. [SGGS 1375]

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3)

“The days of punishment have come, the days of reward have come; Israel shall know it; the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad, because of the multitude of your iniquity, and the great hatred.” (Hoshea 9)

“Thus says the Lord God, ‘Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a disdainful soul, to destroy it in ever lasting hatred.’” (Ezekiel 25)

“For the Lord your God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and destroy you from the face of the earth.” (Deut. 6)

“Or if in enmity he hits him with his hand, so that he dies; he who hit him shall surely be put to death, for he is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall slay the murderer when he meets him.” (Numbers 35)

“The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.” (Deut. 29)

“They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” (Deut. 32)

“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to save them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he shall make an end, a sudden end, of all who dwell in the land.” (Tzeephania 1)

“Do not harbor hatred against anyone. In each and every heart, God is contained. The all-pervading Lord is permeating and pervading the oceans and the land. How rare are those who, by Guru’s grace, sing of Him. Hatred and alienation depart from those who, as devotees, listen to the hymns of the Lord’s praises. Says Nanak: One who becomes a devotee chants the Name of the Lord, and rises above all social classes and status symbols. Acting in egotism, selfishness and conceit, the foolish, ignorant, faithless cynic wastes his life. He dies in agony, like one dying of thirst.” [SGGS 259]

“To some, the Lord has given silks and satins, and to some, beds decorated with cotton ribbons. Some do not even have a poor patched coat, and some live in thatched huts. Do not indulge in envy and bickering, O my mind. By continually performing good deeds, O my mind, you may have the luxuries, but not through jealousy. The potter works with the same clay, and colors the pots in different ways. Into some, he sets pearls (of contentment and compassion), while to others, he attaches filth (of hatred, and an envious nature).” [SGGS 479]

Harbouring animosity towards our fellow human beings is tantamount to perpetrating violence on our own soul. It’s like raising a banner of revolt against God and his offspring. And, as all of us are His children, it is inferred that its equivalent to fighting with our own siblings, rebelling against our own kith and kin.

“A prayer of David: Hear the right, O Lord, attend to my cry, give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.” (Psalms 17)

“He who works deceit shall not dwell in My house; he who tells lies shall not remain in My sight.” (Psalms 101)

“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand His way; but the folly of fools is deceit.” (Proverbs 14)

“My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.” (Job 27)

“Your prophets have seen vain and foolish visions for you; and they have not exposed your iniquity, to restore your captivity; but have prophesied for you burdens of falsehood and deceit.” (Lam. 2)

“And through his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and without difficulty shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken by no human hand.” (Daniel 8)

“Your habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9)

“Ephraim surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still rules with God, and is faithful with the holy ones.” (Hoshea 12)

“Therefore you shall give presents to Moresheth-Gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a deceit to the kings of Israel.” (Micha 1)

“And on the same day also I will punish all those who leap on the threshold, who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.” (Tzeephania 1)

The mortal does not remember the Lord; he wanders around, engrossed in greed. Committing sins, he dies, and his life ends in an instant. His body is like a clay vessel or a brittle metal pot. If you wish to keep it safe and sound, then meditate on the Lord; Chant the Name of the Lord. Chanting His Name night and day, the Lord will eventually hear your call. Says Kabeer: The body is a banana forest, and the mind is an intoxicated elephant. The jewel of spiritual wisdom is the prod, and the rare Saint is the rider. [1376 SGGS]

“He commits innumerable robberies, countless acts of adultery, millions of falsehoods and thousands of abuses. He practices infinite number of deceptions and secret deeds, night and day, against his fellow beings.” [SGGS 471]

When man tries to think of fooling others by being a master-trickster, he too, shall someday become an unsuspecting victim of his own game plan. He is sure to have a taste of his own bitter potion.

“Fire and water join together, and the breath roars in its fury! The tongue and the sex organs each seek to taste. The eyes which look upon corruption do not know the love and the fear of God. Conquering self-conceit, one obtains the Name. One who dies (immerses) oneself in the Word of the Lord, shall never again have to die. Without such a death, how can one attain perfection? The mind is engrossed in deception, treachery and duality. Whatever the Immortal Lord does, comes to pass.” [SGGS 153]

“The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.” (Psalms 58)

“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth.” (Psalms 94)

“For jealousy is the rage of a man; and he will not spare in the day of vengeance.” (Proverbs 6)

“You have seen all their vengeance and all their schemes against me.” (Lam. 3)

“or building an altar to turn away from following the Lord, or if we did so to offer burnt offerings or meal offerings, or peace offerings on it, let the Lord Himself take vengeance.” (Joshua 22)

“And she said to him, ‘My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to that which has come from your mouth; seeing that the Lord has taken vengeance for you of your enemies, of the Ammonites.’” (Judges 11)

“For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the cause of Zion.” (Isaiah 34)

“But, O Lord of hosts, you who judge righteously, who tests the inwards and the heart, let me see your vengeance on them; for to you have I revealed my cause.” (Jeremiah 11)

“Thus says the Lord God: Because Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them.” (Ezekiel 25)

“And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations, such as they have not heard.” (Micha 5)

“Answer evil with goodness; do not fill the mind with anger, thus your body shall not suffer from any disease, and one shall obtain everything. Says Fareed: The bird (human-being) is a guest in this beautiful world-garden. The morning drums are beating, indicating it is, now, time for departure (moment of death). Musk is distributed during the night; those in deep slumber shall never become the recipients of their share of this Blessed commodity (hence do not harbor any ill-will towards another, during this short span of a ‘night’, that is this lifetime).” [SGGS 1381]

“Do not turn around and strike those who strike you with their fists. Kiss their feet, and return to your own home (do not generate a feeling of remorseful revenge, as it is harmful for your progress). When there was time to earn name and fame, by performing worthy deeds, one was in love with the world, instead.” [SGGS 1378]

“Do not harbor evil intentions against others, and by so doing one shall not be troubled. The Name of the Lord, as preached by the True Guru, is the effective mendicant, and not the Tantric-rituals or the Mantra-recitations or the Yogic-postures. Nanak experiences this peace night and day.” [SGGS 386]

“If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And to you shall be his desire, and yet you may rule over him.”(Gen. 4)

“And you shall offer every day a bull for a sin offering for atonement; and you shall cleanse the altar, when you have made an atonement for it, and you shall anoint it, to sanctify it.” (Exodus 29)

“And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering.” (Lev. 4)

“And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bull of the sin offering which is for himself.” (Lev. 16)

“And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering.” (Num. 6)

“And if a man has committed a sin deserving death, and he is to be put to death, and you hang him on a tree.” (Deut. 21)

“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deut. 24)

“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.” (Samuel I: 12)

“Then hear you in heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land which you gave to their fathers.” (Kings I:8)

“Virtue and sin exist in the body together.” [SGGS 126]

“O kind father, ignore my sins.” [SGGS 12]

“The sinners act, and perform nefarious acts (misdeeds), and then they weep and wail, when such acts misfire and backfire. Says Nanak: just as the churning stick churns the butter, so does the judge of righteousness torture them. Says Nanak: Speaking in righteousness, one’s world (home) becomes sanctified.” [SGGS 1425]

“Emulate the one who binds in bondage his evil and corrupted gaze. One who does not know the difference between vice and virtue wanders around uselessly, and aimlessly.” [SGGS 1329]

Due to ignorance, egotism and lust for power, sex and wealth, man has sacrificed man at the altar of his multifarious cravings. The height of inhumanity was when man did not think twice before sacrificing fellow-beings, to appease God. Now, this is an absurd and ridiculous level, to which man stooped. How could God, the Father and Mother, be asking for the sacrifice of one child, to be perpetrated by another. The same feeble argument (appeasement of God) has been repeatedly advanced regarding man enslaving man over the centuries, and for retaining extra-judicial control over others' land, life and family members. Inhuman and undignified behavior was evident when man forced women to marry several husbands, at any given point in time, and when man had a 'harem' comprised of hundreds of ladies for the satisfaction of his carnal-instincts. Religious intolerance was at its pinnacle, but the fanatic was considered to be the most pious one. Discrimination, on account of race, gender, color, creed, status, caste and religion, have been the other indelible black spots on the canvas. All such thoughts, words and deeds that are detrimental or prejudicial to the interests of another, are tantamount to being a "sin". Quite often, a sin may be an act of omission, rather than that of commission.

“But like a wife who commits adultery, who takes strangers instead of her husband!” (Ezekiel 16)

“Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not.” (Jeremiah 7)

“There is swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and blood leads to blood.” (Hoshea 4)

“But whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does it destroys his own soul.” (Proverbs 6)

“You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20)

“And the man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20)

“Overflowing with sexual desire, one’s intellect is stained with darkness; in the heat of youthful passion, one looks with desire upon the faces of other men’s wives, unable to distinguish between good and evil. Drunk with sexual desire and other great sins, one goes astray, and does not distinguish between vice and virtue.” [SGGS 93]

“Others’ spouses, others’ wealth, greed, egotism, corruption, evil passions, slander of others, sexual desire and anger — all of these are like venom; give up all these.” [SGGS 1255]

“And out of the ground made the Lord God every tree to grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2)

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6.)

“And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.’” (Exodus 34)

“And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you; but will lay them upon all those who hate you.” (Deut. 7)

“And they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him; for they saw that his suffering was very great.” (Job 2)

“Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things have come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he has destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you.” (Joshua 23)

“O Lord, you know; remember me, and be mindful of me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in your long suffering; know that for Your sake I have suffered insult.” (Jeremiah 15)

“And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, Arise, follow after the men; and when you do overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good?’” (Genesis 44)

“God, the world is burning in its own sins. Save it through your mercy.” [SGGS 853]

The ‘demonic evil’ manifests itself in negative thoughts, harsh words and cruel deeds, perpetrated against one another, consequently bringing great suffering for both (oppressor and oppressed) in the long run.

“The pain of separation is as unbearable as the pain of extreme hunger. The greatest, and unendurable, pain is the attack of the messenger of death. Another pain is the disease consuming my body. O doctor, don’t administer the medicine. The pain persists, and the body continues to suffer. This medicine has no effect. Forgetting his Lord and Master, the mortal enjoys sensual pleasures; then, disease wells up in his body. The blind (ignorant/foolish) mortal receives his punishment. The value of sandalwood lies in its fragrance. The value of a human lasts only as long as the breath in the body. When the breath is taken away, the body crumbles into dust. The mortal’s body emanates a golden-aura, and the soul-swan is immaculate and pure, if even a tiny particle of the Immaculate Name resides within. Only then shall all pain and disease be eradicated. Says Nanak: The mortal is saved through the True Name.” [SGGS 1256]

“Worldly possessions are obtained by pain and suffering; when they are gone, they leave pain and suffering. Says Nanak: Without the True Name, hunger is never satisfied. Beauty does not satisfy hunger; when the man sees beauty, he hungers even more. As many as are the pleasures of the body, so many are the pains, which afflict it.” [SGGS 1287]

“Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hidden ourselves.’” (Isaiah 28)

“Against whom do you make sport? Against whom do you open your mouth wide, and draw out the tongue? Are you not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood.” (Isaiah 57)

“In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.” (Isaiah 59)

“Every man becomes stupid without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.” (Jeremiah 10)

“This is your lot, the portion I have measured for you, said the Lord; because you have forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.” (Jeremiah 13)

“Every man becomes stupid without knowledge; every goldsmith is put to shame by the carved idol; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.” (Jeremiah 51)

“When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria; for they commit falsehood; and the thief comes in, and the bandits rob outside.” (Hoshea 7)

“If a man, walking in wind and falsehood, would lie, saying, ‘I will preach to you of wine and of strong drink, even he would be the preacher of this people!’” (Micha 2)

“Whose mouth speak vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.” (Psalms 144)

“Through the Guru’s Teachings, some eliminate selfishness and conceit, and meditate on the Name of the Lord. Undertaking any other task, they waste their lives in vain. Without the Name, all that they wear and eat is poison. Praising Him, they merge with the True Lord. Investing counterfeit capital, they earn only falsehood in the world.” [SGGS 144]

“Falsehood and corruption cause terrible suffering. All the religious robes and social classes look just like dust. Whoever is born, continues to come and go. O Nanak, only the Naam and the Lord’s Command are eternal and everlasting.” [SGGS 352]

“The intellect of the self-willed is engrossed in falsehood. Without the meditative remembrance of the Lord, it suffers in sin. Renounce evil-mindedness, and you shall reap the rewards. Whoever is born, comes through the unknowable and mysterious Lord.” [SGGS 356]

“The self-willed practices falsehood, only falsehood. He never attains the mansion of the Lord presence. Attached to duality, he wanders, deluded by doubt. Entangled in worldly attachments, he comes and goes. Behold, the decorations of the discarded bride! Her consciousness is attached to children, spouse, wealth, and Maya, falsehood, emotional attachment, hypocrisy and corruption.” [SGGS 363]

“Sin is bad, but it is dear to the sinner. He loads himself with sin, and expands his world through sin. Sin is far away from one who understands himself. He is not afflicted by sorrow or separation. Falsehood is bad, and death is cruel. The mind is enveloped by entanglements, and into entanglements it falls. Without the Name, how can anyone be saved? They rot away in sin.” [SGGS 935]

“And God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.’” (Genesis 6)

“If a soul sins, and commits a trespass against the Lord, and lies to his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or has deceived his neighbor.” (Leviticus 5)

“The God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence” (Samuel II: 22)

“Their webs shall not become garments, nor shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.” (Isaiah 59)

“For whenever I speak, I cry out loud, I shout of violence and ruin; the word of the Lord is a reproach to me, and a derision all day.” (Jeremiah 20)

“Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, nor their abundance, nor their splendor; nor shall be wailing for them.” (Ezekiel 7)

“Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done against the people of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.” (Yoel 4)

“For they do not know how to do right, says the Lord, those who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.” (Amos 3)

“For your violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.” (Ovadia 1)

“Holy saints, this mind cannot be restrained. Fickle desires dwell with it, and so it cannot remain steady. The heart is filled with anger and violence, which cause all sense to be forgotten. The jewel of spiritual wisdom has been taken away from everyone; nothing can withstand it.” [SGGS 219]

“Listen, O my friends: let’s join together and make an effort to surrender to our Husband Lord. Renouncing our pride, let’s charm Him with the potion of devotional worship, and the mantra of the holy saints. O my companions, when He comes under our power, He shall never leave us again. This is the good nature of the Lord God. O Nanak, God dispels the fear of old age, death and hell; He purifies His beings. Listen to my sincere prayer: let’s make this firm resolve. In the peaceful poise of intuitive bliss, violence will be gone, as we sing the glorious praises of the Lord of the universe. Our pains and troubles shall be eradicated, and our doubts shall be dispelled; we will receive the fruits of our minds’ desires. O Nanak, meditate on the Naam, the Name of the supreme Lord God, the perfect, transcendent Lord.” [SGGS 249]

“My beloved Lord God is not far away. My mind is pleased and appeased by the word of the True Guru’s teachings. I have found the Lord, the support of my breath of life. This is the way to meet your Husband Lord. Blessed is the soul-bride who is loved by her Husband Lord. Social class and status, race, ancestry and skepticism are eliminated, following the Guru’s Teachings and contemplating the word. One whose mind is pleased and appeased, has no egotistical pride. Violence and greed are forgotten. The soul-bride intuitively ravishes and enjoys her Husband Lord; as Guru’s chosen one, she is embellished by His Love.” [SGGS 93]

“The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the plunder; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.” (Exodus 15)

“Burning with lust among the terebinths, under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks?” (Isaiah 57)

“A wild ass used to the wilderness, sniffing the wind in its desire; in its lust who can turn it away? All those who seek it need not weary themselves; in its month they shall find it.” (Jeremiah 2)

“Nor did she give up her harlotry brought from Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they handled her virgin bosom, and poured out their lust upon her.” (Ezekiel 23)

“And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their lust, and she was polluted by them, and her soul was turned from them.” (Ezekiel 23)

“They were not yet sated with their lust. But while their food was still in their mouths.” (Psalms 78)

“Lust not after her beauty in your heart; nor let her take you with her eyelids.” (Proverbs 6)

“The righteousness of the upright shall save them; but transgressors shall be caught by their own lust.” (Proverbs 11)

“Beauty and sexual desire are friends; hunger and tasty food are tied together. Greed is bound up in its search for wealth, and sleep will use even a tiny space as a bed. Anger barks and brings ruin on itself, blindly pursuing useless conflicts. It is good to be silent, because without the Name of the Lord, one’s mouth spews forth only filth. Royal power, wealth, beauty, social status and youth are the five thieves. These thieves have plundered the world; no one’s honor has been spared. But these thieves themselves are robbed, by those who fall at the Guru’s feet.” [SGGS 1288]

“O Lord and Master, in ignorance this mind is sold out, and is, now, in Illusion’s hands. Lord and Master, the Guru of the World, here’s a lustful being of the Dark Iron-Age (KaliYuga). The five vices have corrupted the mind. Moment by moment, they lead the mind further away from the Lord.” [SGGS 710]

Unbridled sexual indulgence and promiscuity have been the sole cause of the spread of the deadly epidemic called AIDS, along with several other life-endangering diseases.

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, ‘Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you; and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.’” (Exodus 4)

“And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, Am I in God’s place, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” (Genesis 30)

“And Gideon said to God, ‘Let not your anger burn against me, and I will speak but this once; let me try, I beg you, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew.’” (Judges 6)

“Until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send, and fetch you from there; why should I be deprived of both of you in one day?” (Genesis 27)

And all these your servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, “Get out, and all the people who follow you; and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.” (Exodus 11)

Your calf, O Samaria, has cast you off; my anger is kindled against them; how long will it be before they attain to innocency? (Hoshea 8)

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret yourself; it comes only to evil. (Psalms 37)

“Sheikh Fareed advises: Answer evil with goodness; do not fill your mind with anger. Then this body shall not suffer from any disease, and one shall obtain everything. [SGGS 1381]

“One who has an abiding faith in the holy-word, God resides within him (body and soul). He does not come or go in reincarnation, and he is rescued. Through the word of the Guru, his heart-lotus blossoms forth. Whoever is seen, is driven by hope and despair, by sexual desire, anger, corruption, hunger and thirst. Says Nanak: Those detached recluses who meet the Lord are so very rare.” [SGGS 224]

“Sexual desire and anger are very powerful in the body; bless this devotee with courage and fortitude that he may rise to wage war against them, and that he may emerge victorious. Lord, please treat me as Your own and save; through the perfect Guru, drive them out. The powerful fire of corruption is raging violently within; the word of the Immaculate Guru is the icy water which soothes the body and provides solace to the mind. The mind and body are calm and tranquil; the disease has been cured, and now there’s peaceful sleep. As the rays of the sun spread out everywhere, the Lord pervades each and every heart. Meeting the holy saint, one drinks in the sublime essence of the Lord; sitting in the home of the inner being, drink in the essence of His Name.” [SGGS 1325]

Anger could be the consequence of an array of feelings and emotions, including victimization and betrayal, powerlessness, insecurity, failure in communication and a host of related causes. To keep the demonic force of anger, at bay, one could deploy the technique of 'stepping-back', or even think in terms of adopting a novel method of self-imposition of a penal action, for each defeat at the hands of anger.

JUDAISM & SIKHISM

Commonalities and Differences : A Synopsis

The Origins

Both started as per Divine will.

Judaism developed, as Command to Prophet Abraham.

Sikhism sprang up as a revelation to Guru Nanak.

Each established a firm and distinct identity. From another standpoint, both claim to be revolutionary protest movements, launched to bring about a radical transformation in the psyche of the masses; both rebelled against ritualism, superstitious beliefs, prejudices, and ceremonial legacies.

The Founders

As per Jewish belief, Abraham was sent by God to liberate sinners, and called Him his friend.

As per Sikh belief, Guru Nanak was anointed through Divine Revelation, and he proclaimed himself as ‘Servant of God’, though he has been described by his contemporaries as ‘God-incarnate’.

Divine Light

Abraham had several disciples and a large family to embody the Divine Light and carry on the mission.

The Divine Light, originating in Guru Nanak was transmitted to nine successive Gurus in human-form, before finally being preserved, for eternity, in the Holy Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib.

Creation of the Universe

Both subscribe to the view that there are countless galaxies, and constellations; man cannot gauge God’s extent and expansiveness. Both religions believe that God is beyond time, space, and human comprehension, i.e.: unfathomable.

Sikhism believes that God created the entire universe with a single command; all at once, not in phases.

Judaism believes that God created everything in six days, and on the seventh day, He rested.

Idol-Worship

Both condemn it vociferously; Sikh Gurus did not seek to be venerated. Instead, the Scriptural writings are given paramount importance. Both religions disfavor idolatry (statues, symbols, icons, photographs).

In Judaism, the second of The 10 Commandments is very specific regarding this issue: You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make yourself a graven image, nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down unto them nor serve them.

Status of the Holy Congregation

In Judaism, the congregation is accorded due respect.

In Sikhism, it is designated at 'par with the Guru'.

Power of Prayer

Both believe in it. Holy congregation's prayers assume powers of healing. These prayers are heard in the Lord's court, and suffering humanity is rescued, as per God's word enshrined in the holy books.

Both believe that where there are two or more adherents, in collective prayer, there resides God.

Atonement and Repentance

Both are unanimous that righteousness, atonement and repentance, must be emphasized.

Sikhism believes "the hand that sins, suffers the punishment; all are accountable, individually". It stresses upon both, righteousness as well as repentance, in that order.

Ascetism and Celibacy

Both discourage the practice of asceticism and celibacy. The life of a householder is encouraged, as a potent vehicle for serving humanity. Also, it is considered a natural way of life, because the ‘attraction’ for it is unavoidable, even though a person remains a celibate; hence, the desired fruits of celibacy are not reaped.

Love and Service to Humanity

Both are vociferous in the condemnation of religious fanaticism, and conversions by deployment of force, or persuasion; it is all right if one were to embrace a religion of one’s own volition, totally voluntarily. Both believe in the dictum: “Service to humanity is service to God”, uplifting of weaker sections of society. Both encourage the practice of ‘tithe’ (donating ten per cent of one’s honest earnings to charity).

Addictions

Both preach that all addictions/vices (adultery, prostitution, gambling, drugs, etc.) result in sin, suffering, and evil.